ARMORED COMBAT

Paul of Bellatrix

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER	SECTION	PAGE
INTRODUCTION	1	4
GENERAL TECHNIQUES	2	6
STANCE	2	6
Tactical Considerations	2	6
Mobility	2	7
PERCEPTION & CENTERING	3	8
Mental	3	8
Flow	3	8
Cues	3	8
Preparation	3	9
SWORD	4	10
Physics	4	10
Stance	4	10
'Snap' Techniques	4	11
Teaching Analogs	4	12
Speed Exercise	4	13
Variations	4	14
Return Techniques	4	15
Side Return (Teardrop)	4	16
Half Teardrop Return	4	18
Overhead Return	4	19
Push-Through Return	4	20
Advanced Strike/Returns	4	21
Sword-Side Attacks	4	21
Sweep Strikes	4	23
Backhand Reverses	4	23
Drag Strikes	4	24
Wraps	4	24
SHIELD	5	27
Position	5	27
Punch Block	5	27
Multiple Blocks	5	28
Offensive Techniques	5	29
Presses	5	29
Hooks	5	30
Defense	5	31
EXERCISES	6	33
Movement & Balance	6	33
3-Step 'U' Walking	6	33
6-Step Turn Walking	6	34
Sideways Walking	6	35
Forward Scallop Walking	6	36
Power Pushing	6	37
SWORD EXERCISES	7	39
Pell Work	7	39
Butterfly Walk	7	40
Return Analog	7	42
Return Timing	7	45
SHIELD EXERCISES	8	47
Shield Hook	8	47
INTEGRATED EXERCISES	9	48

Alternate Sword/Shield/Step	**9**	**48**
Two-on-One	**9**	**49**
Slow Work	**9**	**51**
Appendix A - To Find a Proper Stance	**10**	**56**
Appendix B - Sword Balance and Construction	**10**	**57**
Appendix C - Shield Balance and Construction	**10**	**58**
Appendix D - Breathing Exercise	**10**	**59**
Appendix E - Common Problems	**10**	**61**
Appendix F - Especially for Women	**10**	**74**
Appendix G - Two Swords (Florentine)	**10**	**80**
Appendix H - Single-Hip Returns and Attacks	**10**	**82**
GLOSSARY	**11**	**90**
AUTHOR'S NOTES	**12**	**91**

LIST OF DIAGRAMS AND FIGURES

DIAGRAM / FIGURE		SECTION	PAGE
Figures 1a-1b	**Stance**	**2**	**6**
Figures 2a-2d	**Snap**	**4**	**11**
Figures 3a-3d	**Wavy-Rising Snap**	**4**	**15**
Figures 4a-4f	**Side Return (Teardrop)**	**4**	**16**
Figures 5a-5d	**Overhead Return**	**4**	**19**
Figure 6	**Overhead Return (moving blade)**	**4**	**20**
Figures 7a-7d	**Push-Through Return**	**4**	**20**
Figures 8a-8c	**Wrap**	**4**	**25**
Figures 9a-9b	**Punch Block**	**5**	**28**
Diagram 1	**3-Step U-Walking Exercise**	**6**	**33**
Diagram 2	**6-Step Turn-Walking Exercise**	**6**	**34**
Figures 10a-10d	**Sideways Stepping**	**6**	**35**
Figures 11a-11e	**Scallop Walking**	**6**	**36**
Figures 12a-12d	**Power Pushing**	**6**	**37**
Figures 13a-13i	**Butterfly Walk**	**7**	**40**
Figures 14a-14e	**Return Analog**	**7**	**42**
Figure 14f	**Return Analog**	**7**	**44**
Figures 15a-15e	**Return Timing Exercise**	**7**	**45**
Figures 16a-16d	**'Snatch' Shield Hook**	**8**	**47**
Figures 17a-17e	**Alternate Shield/Sword/Step Exc**	**9**	**48**
Figures 18a-18d	**Double-Back Return**	**9**	**53**
Figures 19a-19c	**Foot Placement**	**Appendix E**	**62**
Figures 20a-20b	**Arm Not Cocked**	**Appendix E**	**63**
Figures 21a-21b	**Squaring The Shoulders**	**Appendix E**	**64**
Figures 22a-22d	**No Shoulder Rotation**	**Appendix E**	**65**
Figures 23a-23f	**Short Returns**	**Appendix E**	**66**
Figures 24a-24f	**Pushing Back While Swinging**	**Appendix E**	**68**
Figures 25a-25l	**Pulling Returns into Body**	**Appendix E**	**69-70**
Figures 26a-26f	**Abdomen Not Tensed Properly**	**Appendix E**	**71**
Figures 27a-27f	**Side Return**	**Appendix F**	**77**
Figures 28a-28d	**Whip Around the Corner**	**Appendix F**	**78**
Figures 29a-29e	**Single Hip Return**	**Appendix H**	**82**
Figures 30	**Single Hip Return with Shield**	**Appendix H**	**86**

SECTION 1 - INTRODUCTION

Each person brings an array of assets to a fight. These include mobility, perception, technique, speed, strength, endurance, ferocity, focus, etc. Many fighters, who are gifted with one or more of the physical assets, generally speed and strength, may achieve considerable success by emphasizing these gifts. However, often such a person can only achieve a certain level of mastery before he or she finds that opponents possess similar physical assets, and have supplemented them with other assets that have been developed through training.

My emphasis when developing my style was to enhance speed and power while focusing on the 'developed' assets, primarily perception and technique.

The style of fighting described in this text is a "power" style. This does not mean that it is meant exclusively for the use of large, powerful people. Rather, the style is constructed such that it develops power, and with that power, speed. It is actually a style for people who lack power and speed. If a person already has power and speed, so much the better, but for the rest of us, it is quite useful.

The power is developed in several ways:

- A twisting motion of the body, making use of a sequential tightening of the muscles, provides power to the weapon or shield as they move away on a tangent, or are drawn through curves which are parallel to the body's motion.
- Changing the moment arm (see glossary). This technique makes it easier to move the sword from a standing start, and can multiply the force of a moving blade.
- Shifting the body's weight forward at the proper time.
- Pushing with the foot opposite the direction of motion of the weapon or shield.
- Using the muscles on the opposite side of the body to pull around, while the muscles on the weapon (or shield) side push.
- Utilizing techniques that provide a 'whip' to the weapon.
- Focusing the strikes to a point, rather than sweeping through the point.
- Using techniques that are as efficient and simple as possible. The idea is to avoid unnecessary motion, or motion which bleeds power from the weapon.

When I refer to technique, I refer to specific sets of motions that are used to move the weapon and shield. The "Bellatrix Snap" and the punch block are techniques. Perhaps equally important are the side and overhead returns. I design or adopt techniques for the style with several criteria in mind;

- The technique must be efficient in applying power, and in moving the weapon or shield. Unnecessary motion reduces speed. Improper motion can interfere with the application of power. Some motion can even bleed power or speed from a blow.
- The technique must fit in with the other techniques of the style. Some techniques, while valid, interrupt the flow that I wish to maintain in my fighting. Personally, I use the edge exclusively when fighting with a broadsword or with two broadswords. I don't use a point, because thrusts don't go well with the rest of the style. My son, Duke Stephan, often uses adaptations of the style that emphasizes point or edge, alternatively. My younger son, Sir Brion, fights a sword and dagger style that uses both in the same combinations. There is a lot of room for personal choice.
- The technique must work against the best possible opponents. I won't waste my practice time on techniques that work against inexperienced fighters, but are useless against those of the top rank. To do so would be limiting to my development.

When I refer to perception, I am speaking of several things. These include:

- The ability to "tune in" to the flow of the fight, as if it were a dance, such as a waltz. What I mean is to feel and notice the sequence of interacting motions that have occurred up to the present moment, and extrapolate them into the near future. In this respect, what has come before suggests what will come next. This allows a degree of accurate anticipation to occur, which will enhance the effective

speed of defensive motions, (by giving advance warning when and where they will occur) and direct offensive techniques to the proper targets (by suggesting when and where that an opening will occur.) This anticipation can add to the effective speed of a fighter who does not possess physical speed of arm or leg.

- The ability to notice focus and patterns. Noticing a focus can also aid in anticipating attacks, and can suggest possible targets that become more attractive. A gross example would be if your opponent was leaning to his or her sword side, looking towards your knee, and leaning forward and down, this might suggest an impending attack on your shield leg. It also would suggest that a step-in, overhead wrapping shot might have a good chance of success, since the opponent's attention is clearly on the opposite corner. These foci and patterns can include:
    - Sequences of motion, such as a particular pattern of steps during an approach, "bobbing" up and down while walking, alternatively raising and lowering the sword, rhythmic feints, etc.
    - Lack of motion that, over a period of time, creates a pattern. This may lead into a focus of attention to the intent of not moving.
    - A shifting of a part of the body that signals the commitment of the fighter to a direction or a mode of attack. For instance, leaning forward will likely signal a commitment to a forward motion. Drawing back the sword elbow at the same time will suggest an attack that will accompany that motion.

Another important concept is commitment. The art of armored fighting, like the other martial arts, relies heavily on commitment. By this I do not mean the commitment to train hard, to beat ones opponent, or to excel, although these are important. Rather, I refer to commitments to a movement, a lack of motion, a pattern, an attack plan, or the anticipation of an attack.

A fighter must strive to avoid commitments, except when making a conscious choice to commit. At that point, the commitment should be total.

For instance, after the salute, many fighters start a fight by raising their shield and sword, and letting their weapons and body settle down into the proper position to start combat. However, many fighters commit so thoroughly to that starting position that they are unable to easily move out of it for a few seconds. This commitment to a position can allow an alert opponent to launch effective attacks during this short time period, since the fighter in question has committed to have his or her shield stay in that starting position rather than blocking.

On the other hand, a half-hearted attempt at a punch block is not only ineffective, but commits a fighter to having their shield away from their body in a position which only guards a limited area. This might allow an opponent to launch an effective combination from the initial blow, since the recovery of the shield may be delayed. This is assuming that the blow was blocked in the first place.

In another example, one occasionally sees a fighter swing a blow to draw a response from his or her opponent. This is useful only if the technique is performed properly. A quick swing towards the opponent's sword shoulder, followed by a fast, well-executed return can often lead to an effective second blow after the opponent's riposte is blocked. If the initial blow is slow and lazy, due to lack of commitment, and the return is similarly performed, this may leave openings that the opponent can exploit.

Readers should note that all figures show the techniques they demonstrate in the exaggerated motions used in slow practice. Motion moves in as speed increases.

SECTION 2 - GENERAL TECHNIQUES

STANCE

There are three basic ways of varying a stance. It can be either;

- Low and wide, or high and narrow

  This refers basically to how much the knees are bent, and how far apart the feet are.

- Open or closed

  This is best explained by example. A totally closed stance is one where the feet are placed one behind the other on the line leading towards ones opponent. A totally open stance is one where the feet are parallel, and both placed on the line perpendicular to the line leading towards ones opponent.

- Crouched, or upright

  A crouched stance is one where the fighter is bent forward at the waist. An upright stance is one where the upper body is held relatively vertical. It is also possible to vary an essentially upright stance by leaning, without bending the waist.

I recommend a moderately open stance, where both feet pointing about 30 degrees from front and parallel. From a line drawn through the legs towards the opponent, the toe of the front foot should touch the line, while the heel of the back foot should be four to six inches away from the line on the side opposite the front foot. Please see figures 1a and 1b, below.

Figure 1a

Figure 1b

The height and width of a stance should vary with the situation. A low stance can provide more power, since the legs have a better angle at which to push. I prefer to widen my stance when I move into "slugging" range during an attack, especially when using two swords. I prefer to use a higher, narrower stance at range, since it provides increased mobility.

I do not use a crouched stance in my style. Crouching interferes with the rotational power application that I use for my strikes, blocks, and returns. This is because the rotational style relies in the stomach muscles to connect the upper and lower body, and crouching makes it difficult to keep the stomach muscles flexed, so that they can fulfill this role. Also, crouching moves the upper body forward from the center of rotation, and thereby interferes with that rotation. A crouching stance can be used effectively in a style that emphasizes close contact, and that relies heavily on thrusts for offensive techniques.

Tactical Considerations

Stance variations that are not generally useful, such as the lean, can be profitably used in certain situations. Generally, most variations gain situational advantages by incurring a disadvantage. A decision must be reached as to whether the advantage gained is worth the price. In any case, it is dangerous to assume that since a tactic works so well in one instance that it will be similarly effective in all circumstances. Some of these variations are as follows:

- Sword Foot Forward

  This stance provides the advantage of increased range by allowing the sword shoulder to move further forward during a swing. Personally, I find it most useful as a transitional stance during combinations or movement. The disadvantages are severely reduced power and reduced support and mobility for the shield arm. In single-sword fighting it has the additional disadvantage of reducing the protection for the front leg, if the opponent is fighting with the opposite hand.

- More Open Stance

  This is generally useful in the cross-blocking style of Florentine, and single-sword fighting. In this Florentine style, the stance is opened sufficiently that the toe of the back foot is almost even with the

heel of the front foot, with the width slightly wider than it would be with sword and shield. This allows more leg push to be applied to the second sword. It also allows the cross-blocks to reach to the opposite knee. The disadvantage is that it opens up the centerline of attack. In single sword, it allows a cross block to reach low blows on the opposite side of the body.

- Leaning

  I do not use leaning much in my style. If I choose to commit forward, or if I wish to present the illusion that I am closer than I am, I will lean slightly forward, realizing that this will interfere with my techniques, while providing positional and tactical advantages. I never lean back, except while dodging. Leaning back can provide similar positional and tactical advantages to a forward lean (as well as similar interference with technique), but I consider the advantages outweighed by the commitment backward.

Mobility

Movement should employ the concepts of balance and commitment. It is very desirable to avoid committing your weight to any direction not desired. This includes leaning as well as shifting your weight too early during movement. When your weight is centered, movement in any direction starts from that center. If, for example, you are leaning forward or back, or your weight is distributed heavily forward or back, movement in the opposite direction, or laterally, will be more difficult and slower, since you will have to pass back through the center balance point before moving on. If, on the other hand, your weight is balanced, but you commit your weight heavily to each step, you will be unable to react properly to an attack or movement which occurs during that commitment, but before your balance is restored after the step.

Further, it is important to avoid any unnecessary motion, or commitment to a pattern of motion forward or back, sideways, or up and down, etc. This also includes repeated patterns of motions which otherwise are correct. It also can include motionlessness, held too long. It also includes extra motion during swings and blocks, even when not walking.

Basically, these commitments to unnecessary or unwanted directions, movements, and patterns either interfere with your ability to perform efficient techniques, reduce your options of movement or technique, or provide information to your opponent. Please see the section on exercises for more discussion of this subject.

The timing of movement is critical. If you step forward during a strike or block, you will lessen the power. If you step forward just before a strike or block, you can enhance the power. Generally, when you are striking, your weight moves off of your shield foot, allowing you to move that foot. During a return, the weight moves off of your sword foot, allowing you to move that foot.

SECTION 3 - PERCEPTION AND CENTERING

Mental

It is important to be totally within yourself to fight. If you are moved by outside forces, you lose control to the extent that they move you. If you commit mentally to a direction, to an action, or to an inaction, it can be as detrimental as a bad physical movement. For instance, if you are expecting to hit your opponent in the leg while blocking his head blow, you are likely to be completely foiled if he or she is successful at blocking your blow, while striking for your leg instead of your head.

You should strive to be totally ready, but not ready for any specific thing. In that way you will not have to stop committing to a mental pattern before you do what you need to do. Also, if you are not watching for a particular motion or situation, you will notice any others that occur.

Think of your mental approach to fighting as a three-position switch. The three positions are forward, reverse, and neutral. If you are in reverse, mentally, and you have to change to forward, you must first go back to neutral before going forward. This can cause a fatal hesitation. This is a very simple analogy, since during a fight there are numerous ways in which you can commit or anticipate. During a fight, the switch has a multitude of settings, not just three. There is still a neutral, though, and that is where you should stay, unless actively doing something.

Flow

Try to make the whole fight a single entity, so that any movement is noticed and acted upon. Act as if the fight is a dance, where your partner's actions influence yours, and vise-versa. Waltzing is a good analogy. In this dance, pressure from your partner's hands indicates directions of movement. One movement leads to a set of other movements, so a degree of anticipation is quite possible. Fighting is like waltzing three feet apart. The movements of your opponent's body, sword and shield act like the hands of your dance partner to push or pull you. Try to get to the point where you can feel a swing push you out of the way, or pull your shield into it. Try to get to the point where the motions of your opponent's body draw your sword to the openings towards which these motions lead.

Cues

Well over half of the information in normal discourse is through body language. It is likely that we are all adept at receiving and processing the information presented by this medium. During combat, no information is passed by speaking or through facial expression and tone of voice, so we are left with body language.

It is important to pay attention the motions in your opponent's actions. Motions can include gross movements, like a molinet', or subtle things, such as a small rotation of the sword hand before a swing. They can include obvious movements, such as leaning into each step of a forward walk, or things less obvious, as a slight weight shift back during the block of a leg blow.

Any of these can provide the evidence to tell you what the next move will be, thereby allowing you to start your defense or counter-attack before your opponent actually starts to perform the attack itself.

It is also important to pay attention to the patterns in your opponent's movement or lack of movement. These include the habit of standing motionless too long, walking in a repeat pattern of steps, waving the sword up and down, swinging the shoulders from side to side, or attacking with the same sequence of blows, time after time.

Any of these can provide very usable information about timing and intent.

In the case where you opponent is waving his sword up and down, it is quite possible to time the points in the pattern of movement where it is impossible to swing the sword forward. In this example, one such point is halfway through the downward movement of the blade.

In the case where an opponent has not moved for too long, subtler cues, such as a slight slumping of the shoulders, indicate that the intent has shifted momentarily to not moving, rather than readiness to attack or defend. A quick attack at this moment can often succeed.

Preparation

In the martial arts, as well as in many sports, after the physical techniques have been mastered, the game becomes mostly mental. The perception and anticipation so important in fighting cannot be achieved unless the mind is centered, as well as the body. I have known several fighters who did not perform up to their potential, despite possessing remarkable physical gifts, and being technically adept, because they never managed to master the mental game. They would always succumb to "tourney jitters", or "psych themselves out".

The state of mind that I prefer to employ is a calm, but very intense, attentiveness. By calm, I do not mean relaxed. Fighting requires me to "turn things up a notch", thus the intensity. What I mean is being free of concerns and distractions, while being focused on the business at hand. I try to turn myself into a very sensitive receptor of cues, being ready to instantly react properly to any stimulus.

There are several ways of dealing with this. The method I find most effective for me is to practice the mental game in other settings, where the pressure of a tournament is not present. The main venue for this is on the practice field, and usually during exercises, rather than actual sparring. However, it is also important to be able to bring this mental preparedness to the tourney field. A useful method in helping with the translation is to include some events in practice that are also present in tourneys. When one of these events occur in the tourney setting, it will help to call up the state of mind you worked with in practice.

- Saluting

  Use a standard salute every time you engage in a practice exercise that involves a partner. This will associate the act of saluting with the unpressured calm intensity that you should employ in practice. When this same salute is used in a tourney setting, it will act as a cue for you to get in that same frame of mind.

  I like to include a motion of my sword that eventually moves in towards my stomach, pulling me into my center. I follow this with a sweeping motion of my shield which pulls my opponent into me, as if he or she was a dance partner, and a simultaneous backward sweep of my sword, as it moves to my shoulder, to pull me into the dance.

- Meditation

  I don't claim any great knowledge of this area of endeavor. However, from what I have heard, the state of mind that I try to achieve for fighting is similar to the one used in Zen meditation. If you have some sort of meditation exercise with which you are familiar, use it. Personally, I prefer the "active" meditations, where the meditation is incorporated into some sort of movement. Performing Karate katas is a good example. The exercises listed below are some that I have found helpful in this respect.

- Exercises
  - Slow work is great. It is better with a partner, but can be done with a pell.
  - Repetitive movement exercises, like alternate step-punches in Karate are good. It is best to construct very short combinations that are circular in that you end up in the same position from which you started, so that the exercise can be repeated.

    For instance, the first move could be a standard snap. The second move could be an overhead return with a shield block at the same time. Since you can snap from this position, the movements could be repeated. More complex sets can be devised, incorporating stepping.

    Don't get too complicated. Also, try to write down a description once you figure out a good one.
  - Breathing exercises are good. The one I use is described in appendix D.
  - Learn to play Go. The importance here is not to learn the mechanics of the game, but rather to develop a feel for, and a perception of, the flow and pattern of the game. Go is a very abstract analog of fighting. The flow and patterns are similar, but in Go they are simplified, and they move slowly.

SECTION 4 - SWORD

Physics

There is an article of mine in the Known World Handbook. Please refer to that for a discussion on this topic.

Stance

There are three factors to consider when choosing a position in which to hold your sword: the balance point of the sword, the position of the muscle in the front of the shoulder, and any tactical consideration.

- Swords have a balance point. When starting a sword swing, it is easier to get the sword moving if the balance point is closer to the center of rotation of your body. As an illustration, start a strike with the sword on your shoulder. Start another strike with your arm fully extended to the side. It will be much more difficult in the latter case. With this in mind, for maximum efficiency, the position of the sword in a resting, or "ready" position should have the balance point at, or just behind, the center of the body.
- The power being generated for a sword strike generally starts with the legs, and is transferred and amplified as it moves up the body into the arm. After the abdomen, the next most critical transfer point is the shoulder. The muscle in the front of the shoulder must be tight to transfer and amplify the force. If it is slack when the power arrives, the torso will have to rotate some distance until that muscle becomes tight. This will delay the movement of the sword, and decrease the efficiency of the power transfer. With this in mind, for maximum efficiency, the position of the sword arm in a "ready" position should be such that the muscle in front of the shoulder is tight.
- In my mind, the most important tactical consideration involved in the starting position of the sword is the availability of targets. For instance, if the sword is held vertically down the back, especially if the fingers on the sword hand are loose, the possible lines of attack will be limited to those close to vertical.

  There is considerable latitude for personal choice, here. I prefer the sword in a diagonal position, with the sword hand oriented palm forward. This allows me to reach any target on either side of my opponent. Other choices can be made. Also, some people opt to use the sword as a static defense, at the expense of offense. My opinion is that this is an option that limits overall capability.

The position I recommend is as follows:

- The shoulders should be oriented so that the line through them is about 30 degrees from being on the line towards the opponent.
- The sword elbow should be nearly as high as the shoulder, and far enough back that the muscle in front of the sword shoulder is tight.
- The sword hand is over the shoulder, palm nearly forward, and close enough to the head that the ear can be touched with the knuckle of the forefinger.
- The sword rests on the upper back, just below the lower cervical vertebrae, pointing across the back about 30 to 45 degrees from horizontal.

'Snap' Techniques (strikes from a resting or "ready" position)

Primarily, the basic technique is to use the rotational momentum of your body gained from:

- A forward thrust with the back leg, accompanied by
- The bending of the front knee
- Amplified by;
- The forward movement of the sword hip, accompanied by a small backward movement with the shield hip; essentially, a rotation of the hips towards the shield side.
- This is accompanied by a slight backward lean of the shoulders.
- The tightening of the abdominal muscles
- The backward pull of the shield shoulder and arm
- The properly timed movement of weight to the front foot
- The forward pull of the sword shoulder and arm, accompanied by

Figure 2a

Figure 2b

Figure 2c

Figure 2d

- The movement of the sword elbow forward, slightly down, and across the chest. The elbow should move on the same timing as the hip. Please see Figure 2b, above.
- The movement of the sword hand directly from the shoulder towards the target. Please see Figure 2c, above.
- The rotation of the sword hand from palm forward to palm up, lead by the knuckles of the little finger, whipping the sword straight towards the opponent. Please see Figure 2d, above.

Actually, the technique throws the balance point of the sword directly at the target, being more of a punch or a throw than a swing. However, since the sword is a line rather than a point, at some point in the motion, it "whips" around the corner, towards the target.

The sword is held initially so that the center of balance is behind the head, and therefore at the center of rotation. This negates any negative effect the forward balance of the sword might have. The sword hand is kept in by the head during the swing for the same reason. It is only at the end of the swing that the balance point of the sword moves forward. It does not move to the side except as necessary to move around the head towards the target.

Secondarily, the technique requires:

- That the motion of any part of the body remain in a forward-to-back channel of approximately the width of the shoulders
- The back muscles, as well as the stomach muscles, should be tensed
- The muscle in front of the point of your shoulder should start in a tensed, stretched position. This will require the elbow to start back and high.
- The sword hand should turn palm up, with the elbow leading strongly before the sword hand moves off of the shoulder. The hand should remain over the shoulder and as close to the head as possible until late in the swing.

- The elbow should be kept in close to the body during the first parts of the swing, unless you are a relatively small person, then it should swing out more, to gain kinetic energy.
- As the movement progresses, your weight should be balanced, but slightly on your back foot. The backward movement of your shield shoulder should have balanced the forward movement of the sword shoulder, and the forward motion of the knee and hips should have been balanced by the slight backward movement of the shoulders.
- DO NOT start or end leaning in any direction.

The snap as delivered in a learning technique should cause a flat (horizontal) sword swing, moving slightly up. This emphasizes the use of the lower body in the movement. In the combat technique, the hand moves in a similar motion, but the blade should be at an angle, pointing 30 to 45 degrees up. The fastest snaps will still be the flat ones, but they are easier to block.

When practicing the technique without a shield, the shield hand should move as far back and around as possible, while the shield arm extends fully, ending up pointed back and down at about a 45-degree angle, with the shield hand open, and palm forward.

Teaching Analogs

Most of these analogs use a controlled movement of the sword hand to cause the student to perform the proper movements with the other parts of the body. Usually it is necessary to supplement these controlled movements with directions to move other parts of the body in certain ways at the appropriate times.

Flat Hand

- With the student in a fighting stance, with no sword, have the sword hand held open, with the back flat against the ear, and the fingers extended, and pointing forward. Insure that the elbow starts and remains back and high. Start moving the hand in a circle which is on the plane formed by the hand itself. The motion should be up and forward, and down and back (counter-clockwise for right-handers as you look at them from the side). The ear should be at the center of the circle, and the back of the hand should nearly brush against it while moving.
- The shield arm should be bent, forearm horizontal, and across the chest with the shield hand close to the collarbone of the sword shoulder.
- Once the motion has been established, perform the exercise as follows;
- Stop the hand at the top of the top of the circle. The elbow should be back and high.
- Move it to the back of the circle, keeping the wrist straight, but turning the palm forward. The hand should be behind the ear, and the elbow should be back, but pointing down.
- Continue the circle, keeping the wrist straight, but turning the hand palm up at the bottom of the circle. The elbow should be pointed forward and slightly down, and the sword-shoulder should drop slightly. The hand should be no further forward than the ear, and the thumb should be almost touching the ear or neck.
- As the hand moves from the back to the bottom of the circle, the knees should both move forward (bent), and the sword-hip should also move forward and slightly around to the shield side.
- As the sword-hip moves forward, the shield hand should pull across the chest, and eventually move to a point which is down at a 45 degree angle, back, and towards the back heel, with the shield arm fully extended. The hand should end up with the fingers extended, and palm forward. This rotates the upper body so that the sword elbow and hand can move directly towards the target.
- When the hand has reached the bottom of the circle, stop it there while the hips rotate to the point where it is possible to look directly over the sword-hand while looking at the target.

The elbow should have rotated past the line to the target. The hand still should be on the shoulder, close to the head. Now move the hand directly towards the target with the palm up.

- At the end of the swing, the weight should be slightly to the rear foot, but the front knee should be bent at least as far as the front toes. The stomach and hips should be forward and rotated so that the navel points towards the opponent, the shoulders back, and the arms extended in opposite directions. The entire body should be balanced, even though the feet may be rotated up on the front sides. Do not allow the feet to spin on the ground.

Finger Push

- Stand on the sword side of the student, holding your hand on the front edge of his sword hand, having your palm open, and nearly vertical, and just leaning its top edge towards his hand.
- As he starts the slow movement, push lightly down and back. Do not push hard.
- Require that the student move so as to roll around your hand and avoid the direct pressure.
- Insure that the front knee is bent and extended over the front toe.

Speed Exercise

There are two kinds of speed; pure physical speed, and effective speed. The latter has three components; physical speed, technique, and timing. It is possible to increase physical speed slightly, but it is difficult to do so. Technique can be practiced and improved, and it greatly affects effective speed. Timing can also be improved, and can have an even greater effect.

The process to improve timing requires practice to perceive the openings and the cues that indicate the openings are about to occur. A combination of slow work and supervised fast work is generally effective in this respect.

Technique can be improved with a combination of structured movement exercises, and pell work. Start the pell work slow, and gradually allow the speed to increase. Watch for deterioration of the technique as the speed increases. Notice both the overall movement, and various aspects, such as bending the front knee, keeping the hand close, etc.

One exercise, which may help to improve overall speed, is to have someone stand behind the pell with a sword. Have them hold the sword out at head level so that the student can grab it with the shield hand. Have the student squeeze as hard as possible, and close his eyes. Keep the eyes shut for the remainder of the exercise.

- After a few moments, have the student release the hand, but remain aware of the sensation in the hand that remains.
- The student should then pull the shield hand back towards himself or herself, visualizing an elastic band between that hand, and the instructor's sword.
- On the path back, the hand should pass over the sword hilt of his won sword. At this point, have the student imagine that the elastic cord is being attached to the sword.
- Have the student imagine that the cord is pulling harder and harder.
- At some point, the student should release the sword, while visualizing that the sword has instantaneously appeared at the target; not that it moved, but that it is there.
- Repeat the exercise a few times. Do not expect any changes in speed to be retained. Repeat the exercise at other practices, along with the technique described above.

Variations

Right Cross

This technique is performed as a normal snap, but with the target moved to the opposite shoulder. The elbow should lead strongly, and the blade MUST strike at a 45-degree angle. This has the effect of moving the path of attack over. The blow will strike higher on the helm, and closer to the tip of the blade. However, since the blade is at an angle, it still strikes properly.

This technique can be varied by both stepping slightly forward and to the shield side during the strike.

Similar results can be achieved by leaning the only the hips to the shield side, and over-rotating the hips. The shoulders should lean slightly back, but rotate more than normal. It is possible that this will cause you to end up on the shield-side edges of your feet, for an instant.

Wavy

- With the sword at rest, move the sword-hand directly up, such that the hand is just higher than the helmet.
    - At the same time, use the fingers of the sword-hand to quickly point the tip of the sword directly at the face of the opponent. Do not move the hand forward. Please see Figure 3b, below.
    - At the same time, rotate your shoulders (clockwise, if right-handed) slightly.
- When the tip of the sword comes into sight over the front of the helmet, throw a snap, using proper technique, towards the head of your opponent. The blade should hit at about a 45-degree angle.
- Remember that the technique is a count-and-a-half movement, with a slight hesitation when the sword tip is forward.

Rising

- With the sword at rest, bend at the waist sideways towards your sword foot. Do not lean back, and do not allow the abdominal muscles to loosen.
- At the same time, slide the hilt of your sword down and to the same side. It should be moved down at about a 45 degree angle, and in such a way that the sword blade slides across the shoulder, but does not move off of it. Do not move the sword hilt forwards. Please see Figure 3c, below.
- When the bend and hand movement have reached the lowest point (the point where the sword cannot be moved more without loosening the fingers), throw a snap, but leading up strongly up and across with the elbow, and moving the hip strongly forward and around towards the shield side.. This should have the effect of having the tip move down, and then up. The difference in the low and high points of the tip should be several feet. Again, this is a count-and-a-half move, with the hesitation at the low point in the bend. Please see Figure 3d, below.

Wavy-Rising

The two techniques described above can be combined. At the point in the wavy technique, instead of throwing the snap, go into the rising technique.

Drop

The drop swing should be used at slightly closer range than the others. Simply drop the sword hand off of the shoulder, causing the hand to turn palm up, and to move slightly forward. This provides a flat blow just at the bottom of the thigh. This blow should be practiced enough that it hits on target without benefit of direct vision. It can be varied by making the hand turn palm down, whipping the sword into a wrap, while perhaps stepping slightly forward.

Figure 3a

Figure 3b

Figure 3c

Figure 3d

Arm

This blow strikes the arm, crossing the arm at about 30 degrees from the line formed by the length of the arm. Swing a snap, keeping the elbow out while starting the swing, and then try to bring it across the chest. Instead of flattening out the blow, try to keep the blade vertical. The effect will be that the tip of the blade will be pulled out from vertical by centrifugal force, moving further out as the swing progresses. This will allow the blade to miss the shield on the swing. The blow is reasonably safe, since its power is easily controlled, and the sword does not cross the arm at a right angle.

Punch

The punch is most useful against a charge, or while fighting from the knees. In either case, if the opponent opens his shield slightly as he advances, use a snapping technique similar to the arm blow as described above. In this case, do not move the elbow across the chest, but have it move straight out. Aim for the center of the face, (or chest, if you are on your knees) and time the blow so that it just barely clears the edge of the shield as the shield opens with the advance. The blade is vertical at impact, and the strike is fairly low on the sword. It does deliver a jarring impact, and can be very surprising. Do not swing down, but punch directly out.

Return Techniques

These are techniques by which the sword is retrieved from a strike, brought back behind the body so that force can be generated for the next strike, launched on the next strike. While there are many instances where individual strikes occur, it is neither necessary nor useful to return the sword to your shoulder between strikes. Combinations of blows are generally more effective than individual blows. The return techniques described below are designed to aid in throwing these combinations.

There are two main types of returns; the side return, and the overhead return. There is also one I call the push through return.

Side Return (Teardrop Return)

The side return is probably more useful than the overhead, since it can be used to deliver blows to any target on the opponent, whereas the overhead return restricts the choices available for the next blow. This technique is used after forehand blows which are stopped by the opponent, or overhead blows where the sword is not entirely stopped.

Figure 4a **Figure 4b** **Figure 4c** **Figure 4d** **Figure 4e** **Figure 4f**

In general, blade is pulled back and down around the sword side, pulled around and up through a curve behind and to the sword side, and pulled forward towards a target. Unless the next strike is towards a low target, the sword hand, on its way forward, should pass through a point just outside and over the sword shoulder. The path of the sword is generally that of a large teardrop (with the teardrop lying on its side, with the point forward, and the rounded behind the fighter.)

A critical aspect of this movement is the proper timing of the hip rotation. The rotation of the hips around towards the sword side provides much of the impetus to the return of the sword. The rotation of the hips around towards the shield side provides much of the impetus for the subsequent strike.

- The point at which the one rotation changes to the other is very important in determining the efficiency and speed of the return. This point is when the sword hand passes by the hips on its rearward path. If the hips rotate farther back on the return, the upper body can be turned away from the opponent, the path of the sword is lengthened, and it becomes difficult to keep the sword from flipping to the shield side, causing unnecessary motion.
- The timing with which the power from the rotating hips, especially during the subsequent blow, is also very important. The power applied by the hip rotation should be uniform from the time when the sword starts its forward motion, to a point just after it passes over the sword shoulder. If the hip rotates too quickly, either the abdominal connection between the upper and lower body will be lost, or the sword tip will drop strongly as the hand quickly starts its forward motion. In the former case, power is lost as the contribution of the lower body is lost. In the latter case, the lowered tip acts as a brake, requiring the power to be re-applied by the shoulder. If the hip rotates too slowly, it will not contribute significantly to the power of the blow.

It should be noted that while the muscles that cause hip rotation are engaged during the full-speed execution of these techniques, the hip itself does not actually rotate much. It is only during the slow-speed practice or these techniques that a lot of rotation occurs. There are, of course, some techniques that are exceptions in this respect.

One of the major objectives of this technique is to avoid unnecessary motion of the sword while it is behind your back. This is accomplished by keeping the sword to the sword side of your body, rather than allowing it to move behind your body towards your shield side.

The technique is performed as follows;

- The blade is pulled back and slightly down. During the initial part of the return, it is pulled directly along the axis of the blade. This both takes advantage of the downward pull of gravity, and avoids having to 'muscle' the blade into a sideways rotation. Please see Figure 4b, above.
- The pull should be generated more with the hips and legs than with your arm. The hips are not pulled straight back, but are rotated around in a clockwise direction (for right-handed fighters), while the front leg pushes. This allows your larger leg, back, and abdomen muscles to do the work.
    - The shoulders should lean slightly away from the sword during this time. The lean is very slight, and is actually more of a direction of pull for the muscles of the upper body.
    - The front leg should not straighten completely, and knee should move sideways towards the sword side as it pushes.
- As the sword is pulled back,
    - Your hand should move to a palm-down position.
    - The sword elbow should be within a few inches of side. Do not allow the elbow to pull farther back than your hip, because it will cause the arm to be moved into a position where the sword hand is trapped under and inside of the shoulder. If this occurs, it becomes necessary to use a wrist flip to turn the sword over so that it can move back. This makes the plane of the swing more horizontal, forcing the tip of the blade to the shield side, behind the body.
- As the sword hand move past a point directly to the sword side (a line that is perpendicular to the line of advance, which I refer to as the 'side line', the backward rotation of the hips is halted. The rotation halts, and the muscles of body, starting with the lower body, start to slowly pull forward. The actual forward rotation of the hips starts about the time the sword hand moves up to the height of the waist, following the curve upwards. (Please see Figure 4b, above.) This does many things:
    - It helps turn the sword and your hand over at the proper time.
    - It engages the muscles on your shield side earlier to help pull forward.
    - It moves the path of the backswing more towards your sword-side, helping to keep it 'outside' of your body.
    - It moves the arm and shoulder more quickly into the 'locked' position needed for the technique.
- As the body turns, the hand is forced out from the body, assisting the sword to swing out and around.
- As the hips start their forward motion, the hand should move back with the movement of the sword, leaving the elbow as far forward as possible.
- As the sword hand crosses the 'side line';
    - The hand turns from palm-down to palm-up. As this occurs, the wrist is locked into a position similar to that of an Aikido wristlock as it lifts up and pulls forward. To accomplish this, the little finger of the hand should curl strongly across the palm. The hand should move so that the tip of the sword starts towards a point about 30 degrees towards the shield side of directly back.
- It is important to lift up with your index finger as the sword starts moving up behind your back. The tip of the blade should be level with your hand as the sword passes through the horizontal. (Please see Figure 4c, above.) The tip should be higher after that.

- If the tip is too low, the upward pull of the hand later in the swing becomes too pronounced, making the tip drag even more. This slows down the swing, and limits the angle of attack of the subsequent blow to nearly vertical.
- This technique does require some arm strength. If you are unable to do it correctly at fast speed, modify it so that the tip of the sword rises no higher than your hand, and points directly back from the hand. This lessens the strength required.
- In the slow motion practice, the sword really has no momentum, so the hand must push back to simulate this. At its farthest point back, the tip should be pointed up (but short of vertical) and back, with the hand higher than your head. Please see Figure 4b, above.

- While the sword is following the curve behind your back;
  - Continue to push up with the sword hand.
  - Start bending the elbow more, to reduce the radius of rotation (and speed up the sword.)
  - Cause the hand to rise to head height (top of head in slow practice, to the chin in fast work). The hand and sword hilt should be just outside the shoulder at this time. Please see Figure 4e, above.
  - The hips should complete the forward rotation between the time the sword hand starts moving back, away from the hips, and when the hand crosses the shoulder on its forward path. It is important to apply the power smoothly over this interval. It is VERY important not to fully move the hips too soon or too quickly.
- The hand passes over the shoulder in approximately the same position for every blow (except for very low targets). It is the point of maximum efficiency, and disguises the next strike.
  - The hips should already be fully moved, and the hand and arm should now extend directly towards the target
  - It is very important that the tip of the sword remain to the sword side of the body. In other words, it should not wave behind your body, but rather should stay outside of your shoulder. Any movement of the tip of the sword crossing to the shield side of directly back will necessitate unnecessary motion, and delay the next blow.

Strike Direction

As the hand passes over the shoulder forwards, extend the hand directly towards the target. If the target is on your sword side, guide as if pointing with your index finger. If the target is on your shield side, guide as if pointing with your thumb. The latter will cause the hand to start to turn palm down, causing the sword to move to your opponent's sword side.

Half Teardrop Return

The half teardrop is a variation of the side return that is useful for fighters who lack the arm strength to pull the sword around the upward curve in the back of the teardrop. To describe the path of the sword hand during this technique, imagine the same large teardrop as in the standard side return. Cut the teardrop in half, horizontally. Smooth out the curve on the back end so that it smoothly meets the horizontal line. Adjust the teardrop so that the horizontal line is at the same height as your sword shoulder.

Much of the angular momentum of the sword is converted (or shed entirely – I don't know) to a straight vector along the long axis of the sword, as it moves around the back curve into the horizontal line. The momentum is converted back into angular movement at the end of the technique, producing a blow of surprising power. The overall speed is close to that of the standard teardrop.

The advantage of this is that when the angular momentum is converted, the sword becomes very much easier to pull.

To perform the technique:

- You start the return in the same manner as the standard teardrop.
- As the sword starts up the back curve, you pull the sword elbow strongly inward and forward, so that the elbow passes close to the body as it moves forward, followed closely by the sword hand, which comes up to shoulder height.
- The sword is pulled smoothly into the horizontal line, with the tip pointed straight back.
- The elbow follows closely to the forward movement of the sword hip. The stomach muscles should be strongly tightened, to connect the hip with the upper body.
- As the elbow passes in front of your body, it should move across your chest, towards the shield side of your body.
- This allows your hand to move straight forward, out from your shoulder, towards the target.
- When the hand reaches the limit of its extension, it will start to move inward, towards the shield side. This will cause the momentum of the sword to flow towards the tip, and the sword will quickly accelerate around, in a horizontal plane, towards the target.

It is extremely important, when practicing this technique, to get to the point where the sword moves precisely into the horizontal line. Any deviation reduces the effectiveness of the blow. I suggest practicing while using a mirror.

Overhead Return

This technique is used after forehand blows that has missed the opponent, and continues past on a high line, or an overhead blows where the sword is entirely stopped in such a way that it would be difficult, or slow, to perform a side return.

In general, the sword hand is pulled directly back over the sword shoulder, to a point behind, over, and outside of the sword shoulder. At the farthest back point, the hand should be at the level of the top of your head, with your arm forming an approximate right angle, with your forearm just past vertical.

Figure 5a

Figure 5b

Figure 5c

Figure 5d

If the return is performed when the sword has been stopped by the opponent, the blade is pulled back along its own length. If the return is performed when a forehand blow has missed high, the blade passes back horizontally over your head, with the tip pointing towards your shield side.

To perform the technique:

- Pull back with the whole body; hip and shoulders. Orient your pull so that you are not pulling directly back, but to a point about 30 degrees to your sword side of directly back.
- At the same time, twist your elbow to the outside and up such that the little finger of the hand is on top.

- Your hand should pass through a point above your sword shoulder, about six to eight inches out from your head, and above the top of your head.
- If the sword has stopped, keep the sword tip towards your opponent. Pull back with the knife-edge of your palm, with the back of your hand towards your head. The tip of the sword should be lower than the sword hand. Please see Figure 5b, above.
- If it is still moving, keep it swinging horizontally over your head, with the tip towards your shield side, and higher than your hand. Pull back so that the back of your hand is facing to the rear. If your hand is not high enough, you have just hit yourself in the face. Please see Figure 6.

Figure 6

- To throw your next blow.
- If the return is being performed with a stopped blade;
- With your arm still extended towards your back, upper, sword side, start the technique for a snap, but
- Move your hand backward two or three inches as your hips start forward. As you move the hand forward, lead around with your little finger, instead of pushing forward with the palm. If you use this technique, the sword will start its motion to the rear, then whip around as your hand moves forward. If you don't, the sword just changes ends, with no power. Please see Figure 5c, above.
- If the return is being performed with a moving blade;
- Continue moving the sword back from the position shown in Figure 6. The body movements are the same as for the side return technique. The corresponding timing points for the hip rotation are:
- On the overhead return, when the sword hand passes back over your head
- On the side return, when the sword hand passes back past your hip (the 'side line').
- At the rearmost point, the two techniques become identical for the forward swing. Please see Figure 5d, above.

Push-Through Return

Figure 7a

Figure 7b

Figure 7c

Figure 7d

This type of return is often seen in a fast, low-power form, characterized by the sword hand being held in front of the head, and the horizontal sword alternating strikes from either side. My version is considerable powerful, and I use it only to perform overhead strikes after forehand blows. If I wish to continue with another forehand, I use on overhead return.

In general, the technique consists of pushing the sword elbow farther across the body towards the shield side, after the blade has impacted on a high target. The sword hip follows the sword elbow. When the elbow has crossed under the sword hand, which remains relatively stable during this, the body and arm are cocked to supply power for a backhand strike that is delivered by moving the sword elbow quickly towards the sword side, and rotating the sword hip back. The target can be either high or low.

Once the sword blade has impacted from a high forehand strike, the technique is performed in the following manner:

- At the same time: (Please see Figure 7a, above.)
- Pull the sword hand slightly towards your head, with the palm facing you.
- Push the sword elbow farther towards your shield side, passing four to eight inches past the hand.
- Pull back with the shield shoulder.
- Rotate the sword hip counter-clockwise towards the shield side.
- Then, at the same time: (Please see Figure 7b, above.)
- Pull the sword elbow sharply across the front of your body towards your sword side. The direction of the path of the elbow directs the blade towards the next target.
- Rotate the hips clockwise.
- Rotate your shoulders clockwise. Be careful not to get your shield out of position.
- Extend your sword arm so that the hand moves forward and past the intended target. If you don't extend the arm, the strike turns into a slash, and may not deliver sufficient power. Please see Figures 7c and 7d, above.

Advanced Strike/Returns

Sword-side Attacks

From Rest

Attacks which start with the sword at rest generally will be comparatively slow and weak. The main power is generated from the rotation of the hips, and the thrust of the arm coming forward. However, they lack the whipping effect of the extension of the arm with the elbow leading the hand, since the hand leads in these techniques.

Strikes to lower targets are stronger, since the sword moves in a longer path, allowing more drive from the hip and shoulder. Strikes to high targets are rarely strong enough to count, unless the attacker is very powerful, or a supplemental technique is used, such as a preliminary arm motion, or a step.

The basic technique from rest is to turn the body slightly to the shield side, perhaps also leaning the head slightly in that direction, while leading with the hand and driving strongly with the hips and shoulder, as if with a snap. On this type of blow, be sure to aim to the target, rather than swinging through it.

A variation on this technique, which requires a preliminary motion, is:

- Turn the body more strongly towards the shield side, while moving the sword elbow across until it is nearly in front of your face. The elbow must be kept high.

- Pull the arm forward and sharply to the sword side, with the elbow leading the hand, and producing the whipping effect, but with the palm down.
- While this is occurring, the sword hand must lift enough for the sword to pass over your head.
- The shield hip drives this blow, with the sword hip pulling.
- The strikes produced by this technique are short range. If it is possible to rotate the sword shoulder and hip underneath the sword hand before the technique is started, the blows become much more accurate and powerful. However, the initial movement may lessen the surprise.
- This variant is best used as a second blow in a combination started with a high, first strike while closing somewhat with your opponent. Instead of going into a side or overhead return;
- Allow your blade to be stopped by your opponent's helm or shield.
- Keep the sword elbow of your partially extended arm high, and high, move it across your face towards your shield side. Move your sword shoulder some in the same directions.
- Execute the variant technique.
- Blows of this nature may be directed up or down by dipping or raising the shield shoulder.

From Moving Blade

A variation of the sword-side attacks as described in the returns section above can be used to deliver blows from a very wide angle to the opponents sword-side; even to the back leg. The angle from which the attack occurs is useful in avoiding the shield. This technique is also very useful when using a no-dachi (Japanese great sword).

To perform this technique, follow this sequence;

- Use the normal side return
- When the sword is moving back and up, allow the arm to extend, rather than pulling it in to increase the forward speed.
- When the sword points straight back and the arm starts to move forward, start rotating the body much more to the shield side then normal. As the forward motion of the sword progresses, strongly move your sword shoulder across your front towards the shield side.
- As the sword starts to descend towards the target, the body should have rotated enough so that the chest and sword-shoulder muscles are tight, and can be used to pull the sword as the body continues to rotate towards the shield side. If you rotate too fast, this pull will be lost. As the sword continues to descend, continue to rotate until you are facing 90 degrees from your line of advance, and essentially swinging sideways.
- Direct the sword TO the target. Do not sweep through.
- Start your return immediately, so that you will have time to get your shield back in position. It is vital to keep your balance, and have your shield tucked in tight, so that it won't have to swing too far out on the next block.

Sweep Strikes

These are actually feints to the leg with either a forehand or backhand swing that, combined with a forward step and a shallow return, set up a quick, rising blow to the head. This technique is probably most useful in single-sword fights. To execute the technique, follow this sequence;

Forehand

- From just barely in range, start a forehand blow to the leg or a head blow traveling across and down. Use a right-cross technique, but aim just short of the target.
- When the blade approaches the target, pull the hilt slightly towards your chest, just enough to miss. At the same time, allow the blow to start pulling your back foot off the ground.
- After the blade crosses between you and your opponent, step forward with your back foot.
- At the same time start a standard return motion with your hips, but directed as if your rear is now directly towards your sword side.
- As the blade travels out to shield side, pull it up and around in a smooth curve, lifting with your hand, and pushing your thumb across your palm to turn the blade edge-on.
- Using the momentum of your step, and with the shield hip driving the blade forward, lead forward and across with your sword elbow, and push your sword hand directly to the front of your opponent's helm.

Backhand

When starting the technique from an overhead blow instead of a forehand, simply reverse the technique as described above, returning the sword to the sword side (not back and to that side). It is better, in this case, to start with an overhead blow that is thrown with the sword hip forwards.

Backhand Reverses

This technique stops the downward path of the sword at about the level of the upper abdomen during an overhead blow to the leg. After pausing slightly for the opponent to react to the downward blow, the hips are reversed, and the sword is whipped up towards the opponent's helm.

This blow is probably most effective if thrown as part of a combination, so I will describe it as if doing so.

- Throw a normal forehand blow, preferably to the leg, and go into the normal side return.
- Continue the return, having the blade cross over the sword shoulder, on its path forward, and start across your face for a low, sword-side attack.
- After the blade has crossed your face and started down, with the hand at about the level of your upper abdomen, stop the blow. This should not be too difficult, since the blade is at this point almost vertical but trailing the hand. The energy of the sword will then move directly down the blade into the hand, where the arm can easily absorb it.
- At this time, move your hand down about two inches in a smooth curve towards the bottom edge of the hand, down so that the hand turns palm down, and then pull quickly forward and up, driving the sword towards your opponent's face.
- While doing this, rotate strongly forward with the shield hip, timing the greatest force to be applied just as the blade starts forward.
- At the same time, allow your shield shoulder to dip just slightly forward. This will assist your sword to move in a rising.

Drag Strikes

These techniques are most useful in single sword fighting after losing an arm, but they can be used in combinations while still using a shield. They are usually blows to the lower leg, but can be used for a headshot, like a super right cross.

The technique is executed by stepping to one side in the middle of the blow. For low strikes, this flattens the arc of the sword, allowing it to move under many blocks. For high strikes, it changes the angle of attack, making it a variation of the right cross. The step is also useful in positioning you for a different angle of attack on the next swing.

To perform the technique;

- Start your weight moving towards your shield side, lifting the front foot off of the ground and moving sideways, as you initiate a forehand snap to the leg or head.
- After striking, it is best to quickly return your blade, letting your back foot move towards the same direction. This will assist you in getting your shield around.

From my experience, the forehand leg blow is the most effective.

Both the high, forehand technique and the overhead technique are better used as part of a combination after an initial blow from the opposite side.

A great benefit of this technique when not using a shield is that it can be used both to move out of range of your opponent's next blow, and to set up a good angle for yours. In this situation, your blade is left somewhat behind you, as you continue moving in the direction of your initial step, in a good position for a tip-down, vertical block.

Wraps

These are blows thrown as a forehand strike, during which the sword hand turns over towards the inside. The back edge of the sword strikes. The angle of attack for these techniques can be from as low as 5 o'clock, and as high as 12 o'clock (12 o'clock being directly towards the opponent). Backhand wraps are possible, but I don't think that they are very efficient, and I don't use them.

In general, I believe that about 30% of a blows power is lost in most wrapping techniques, so this should be taken into consideration when choosing to use them.

There are three different varieties in my system:

Rolling Techniques

This is a 'mild' version of the wrap. It is used to gain two or three inches of perspective to avoid the shield. I only see limited utility in this technique. The payoff (the change in perspective), is seldom worth the cost (loss of power).

- As the forehand blow is thrown, the hand will turn from its 'at rest' position of palm down or palm forward to a roughly palm-up position.
- While this is happening, the knife-edge of the hand will lead as the hand turns and moves forward.
- During this turn the hand will pass through a position where the thumb is at the back, and oriented vertically.
- If you push forward with the thumb at this point, the hand will end the blow palm down with the blade striking on its back edge.

Whipping Techniques

These techniques are the more effective of the wrap varieties in that they regain some of the power lost initially, and therefore strike harder

As in all wrapping techniques, some power is lost as the hand turns over, and the sword wraps around past 12 o'clock. This is because strikes produced with the snapping technique are basically punches, with the sword along for the ride. The power of these blows is directed to a target, not swung sideways through it. In the non-wrapping snap, the sword whips around, and impacts fairly close to the point at which the power is directed. The more distance between the power focus and the impact site, the weaker the blow. If the impact occurs in the swing before the sword reaches the power focus, the result tends towards being a push, but can still be powerful. If the impact occurs in the swing after the sword passes the power focus, the result is simply a weaker blow.

Figure 8a

Figure 8b

Figure 8c

In the whipping techniques, a reasonable amount of additional power can be generated to be applied to a second power focus point that is farther along in the swing from the original focus.

This is produced by two methods:

- As the blade travels forward, you can notice a sensation of the hand pulling the blade. In a wrap, just as the blade starts to go around the 12 o'clock corner, that sensation changes into one where the blade is pulling. At that point, power can be added by pulling back with the sword-side of the body. Please see Figure 8b, above.
- When you pull back, the sword hand should move somewhat towards your sword side. This has the effect of reducing the radius of rotation of the blade, and its kinetic energy is increased. It also has the useful effect of moving the impact point of the sword further out on the blade. Please see Figure 8c, above.

There are various styles of delivering the whipping wraps; and some experimentation is useful. These styles are similar in that:

- The hand turns palm down, and the back edge strikes. The turnover motion is similar to that of the rolling technique.
- During the forward motion of the sword, the sword hand must be aimed fairly close to the opponent, preferably reaching its nearest point when the sword hand is even with the opponent's head. I prefer about six to twelve inches away from the opponent's head. This is to cause the sword to be in the proper position to impact close to its tip when the sword hand is pulled sideways as the secondary power is applied. Please see Figure 8a, above.
- There is some motion rearward of the arm, or at least some rearward shift of weight as the sword wraps around the 12 o'clock point. The timing on this is critical. If applied too soon, the secondary power focus will occur in the swing before the sword impacts. The resulting strike is much weaker. If applied too late, the strike becomes more of a push. Also, the pull should be gradual, to apply power during the entire time of the whip around the corner. If you pull too quickly, the blade will be pulled sharply sideways, and the power lost. Please see Figures 8b and 8c, above.

- They are generally more effective if delivered after stepping in with the sword foot. The timing on this should be that the step leads the hip movement of the snap, but is not simultaneous.

Swinging Techniques

I do not particularly like these techniques. They are generally not as effective as the whip, and they can lead to bad habits, such as stepping in while you swing, instead of just before. They also inhibit correct returns, since the weight of the body is often committed to far forward.

This style includes many variations, several of which produce powerful strikes. The most popular of these is the "skywrap" or "scorpion". In this variation, the hand is stopped abruptly at its farthest extension, thereby changing the center of rotation from the body to the sword hand. The sword, with its newly decreased radius of rotation (without the extended arm) speeds up.

The negative aspect of these blows is that repeated application will likely injure the sword shoulder and elbow, possibly requiring corrective surgery.

They are similar to the whip, except that;

- The hand need not be as far forward for effectiveness, so a step is optional, but probably useful.
- The blade going out is moving as fast as possible.
- There is no, or a greatly reduced whip when the hand turns over, although most techniques are combinations of swing and whip, not one or the other.

Variation

Drop Strike

In this deceptive technique, the target is the lower back of the front leg. It is performed in this manner;

- From a normal stance, in range, allow the sword hand to drop straight down quickly from the shoulder.
- When the hand reaches the furthest downward point, flip the palm over by moving the elbow back slightly, while moving the hand forward.
- Allow the sword to whip around towards the target.
- Optionally, step forward during the swing to get better range.

SECTION 5 - SHIELD

The subject of shield probably admits of more variation of opinion than in any other aspect of armored fighting. The size, weight and shape of a shield is influenced by the style of fighting in which it is employed, the occasion (tourney, war, pas), the weather (it's too hot to wear much armor, so we use big shields), the size and strength of the fighter, happenstance (somebody left this shield, and ---), tradition (my knight uses one, and ---), recent victories (the Crown Prince just started using one, and ---), the quest for an advantage (if I really extend this point, then ---), and pure personal preference.

I have some strong preferences in shields, only some of which have to do with utility.

I prefer small shields because the use of one forces the fighter to become more involved in the fight, and thereby eventually to become a better fighter. I think that this is because the shield offers less static protection, and must be moved, requiring the fighter to fight with the shield, instead of simply from behind it. The shield becomes integrated into the flow of movements, influencing, and being influenced by the movements of the sword and body. Also, I think (again, personal taste) that the style becomes more elegant as a result.

I prefer a round shield to a heater because it supports the punch-blocking style that I use. With a heater, I have to worry about keeping the edges and corners in proper orientation. Actually, the basic style of punch blocking is similar with both shield shapes. This is a choice of alternatives. Those who prefer heaters or half-rounds like the extra protection offered by the corners. Wankels are another interesting possibility. I haven't seen them used much, so I won't offer any comments.

I feel that kite shields, long heaters, or anything else that offers complete static protection for the leg will inhibit a person's development as a technical fighter. They do contribute to success on the field, but in most cases they provide an obstacle to reaching the top levels. Those who manage, despite using the large shields, are rarely top technicians.

Position

The position described here is for a small round. It will vary slightly for a small heater or half-round. In all cases, I prefer to hold the shield elbow as close to the body as possible. The elbow at rest is in a position that can be as far back as under the shoulder, or as much as several inches around towards the front. The forearm moves diagonally up and across the chest towards the sword side of the body. The bottom edge of the palm of the shield hand is tilted out enough so that if the thumb were extended, it would point at my mouth or chin. When holding a shield, the plane at which the shield is held is such that it is parallel to my line of sight, if I look down. In this way, the shield effectively disappears.

After the fight starts, I notice that the 'hand' edge of my shield moves out, and to the left. This is likely a personal peculiarity.

Punch Block

A punch block is one where the shield is moved out to meet the blow by extension of the shield arm. The forward edge of the shield is the main blocking area, although the top edge is used somewhat for nearly vertical strikes. I contrast this with a rotation block, where the shield is rotated up or down, in approximately one plane, to meet blows. I also contrast it with the block used by large, static shields, where the shield is not moved much at all, except to raise for head shots, without rotation.

The great advantage of the punch block is that when it moves out towards you opponent's sword hand, it obscures a greater part of your body than if it stayed close. This is vital in defending against techniques such as the rising snap, or wavy snap, where the sword effectively changes directions in mid-strike.

To perform the technique:

To Block**: (**Please see Figures 9a and 9b.)

- Open the shield moves almost as if it was a gate opening, while moving it forward towards the approaching blade.
- The target on the blade should be a point about six to eight inches up from the basket hilt.
- Your targeting should be such that if you were not holding the shield, you would block the sword with the base of your little finger.
- For blows coming straight down, or from over your opponent's head, aim the shield to slightly cross the blade, as if blocking with your extended thumb tip.
- Keep the palm of the hand (and the shield) in the same nearly vertical plane in which it started.
- As the shield opens and moves out, push forward with the shield hip, while pulling back with the sword hip.

Figure 9a

Figure 9b

- The shield leg should flex slightly, with the knee moving slightly forward, and more strongly towards the sword side of your body.
- Do not lean forward in the least. If you want to get lower, bend your knees, and perhaps lean a little bit sideways. (Don't bend back, either.)

To Return:

- Withdraw immediately, keeping the top of the shield up, and moving straight back. If you allow the shield to drop on the return, you will have to lift it on the next block.
- If striking with the sword at the same time, the forward movement of the sword side of the body will complement the backward motion of the sword side.
- This may cause the shield elbow to move farther back than the 'rest' position. This is fine, unless the shield is allowed to drop down at the same time.
- Bring your shield hand in as close to your left collarbone as possible. In a slow practice situation, you can tilt your head to the shield side and 'sight' along the edge of your shield for the next block.

Multiple Blocks:

If you are blocking multiple blows without striking, the shield need not move completely back to the 'rest' or farther. The key is to move it back immediately after a block to a point where you can keep your opponent's sword hand in sight as the shield hip moves back to 're-cock' for the next block. The leading edge of the shield should follow the movements of the opponent's sword hand, using very small motions. This eliminates some excess shield motion, and focuses your attention on your opponent's sword.

You may notice that if your opponent is whipping his or her sword from side to side, with their hand staying in about the same position, your shield doesn't have to move much between blocks, since it follows the motion of the hand, not the blade.

Offensive Techniques

The two main types of offensive shield techniques are the press and the hook. Each of these has two sub-types. Of these, I much prefer the "snatch" hook, but I have not had much success in persuading anybody to adopt the technique. However, all of them can be useful at some point.

Timing is essential when employing these techniques. If you press or hook too soon, your opponent will have time to counter by disengaging his or her shield, moving away, or blocking with his or her weapon. If you press or hook too late, your opponent will likely have already performed the block that you are trying to prevent.

In both cases, the objective is to either get the shield out of the way, or immobilize it so that a block cannot be performed effectively. This can be done either directly or indirectly. In the direct application, the opponent's shield is either hooked or pushed out of the way of your intended strike. In the indirect application, the hook or press caused the opponent to resist, and to try to move his or her shield back into the position from which it was moved. If you are not fast enough to use the direct method, you can time your opponent's effort to return his or her shield, and strike elsewhere while his or her attention is diverted to this effort.

These techniques should only be used against the shield or weapon of your opponent. You may not deliberately use your shield to strike or push the head, body, or limbs of your opponent.

Presses

Shield presses can be performed with either the face of the shield, or with the edge of the shield.

Face

I discourage the use of this technique. Since the shield positions of you and you opponent are relatively the same, it becomes increasingly likely that your opponent will be successful in using the technique against you, rather than you using it successfully against your opponent. I prefer to use techniques where the odds are more in my favor.

It is never a good idea to use this technique if your opponent is significantly larger or stronger than you are. If you do, you are likely to be countered by what I term the "opening the gate" technique, where your opponent essentially swats you out of the way with his or her shield.

Basically, the technique is employed when the shields of the two fighters are touching with the entire faces of the shields in contact. The objective is to use the strength of your arm, or the weight of your body, to either move your opponent, or his or her shield, into a position where a target become available for your weapon, or to prevent the shield from blocking a strike.

The most effective ways of using this technique are to:

- Push up and in with your shield hand while extending your shield arm, and leaning along the direction of the arm. Generally this is followed by an overhead strike to your opponent's head.
- Push in and around with your shield elbow while extending the upper part of your shield arm. Generally, this is followed by a wrapping strike to your opponent's back.
- Leaning in and over the top of your opponent's shield, pushing with your shield shoulder. Generally this is followed by an overhead strike to your opponent's head.

Edge

This is my preferred use of shield presses. The technique is basically a punch block towards a point close to the edge of your opponent's shield. The punch is extended into a push, after contact.

Basically, the technique is employed when the two are close enough that one shield can be reached by the edge of the shield of the other fighter extended in a punch block. The objective is

to move your opponent's shield out of the way of a strike. With proper timing, it can also be used to move your opponent's shield into a position that will interfere with his or her strikes towards you.

Important points concerning this technique are:

- Aim towards points a few inches in from the edge of your opponent's shield. In this way, you will have a mechanical advantage, since you will be pushing along the length of your arm, while you opponent will be resisting at a right angle with the length of his or her arm.
- Don't use sharp, quick punching techniques. Instead, execute the punch quickly, but then extend it into a push once the contact is made with your opponent's shield.
- When you punch for the sword-edge of your opponent's shield, your opponent will be open for forehand strikes and wraps. However, an agile opponent can counter with overhead strikes.
- Conversely, when you punch for the shield edge of your opponent's shield, your opponent will be open for high overhead strikes. However, an agile opponent can counter with forehand strikes and wraps.
- The top or bottom edges or points of your opponent's shield are also good targets for shield punches. In either case, there is a possibility of a counter.

Hooks

There are two types of shield hooks, positional and the "snatch".

Positional

Positional shield hooks can be performed while returning your shield after a punch block. This requires appropriate relative positions of the shields of the two fighters. It is performed as a later part of a series of movements, and is always preceded by a punch block. There are two main circumstances where this hook variation is most effective:

- When you extend your shield to block your opponent's forehand strike, if you extend it far enough, you can sweep it sideways, out from and across your body, catching the leading edge of your opponent's shield.
- This requires that you have enough time to extend your shield that far in the first place.
- It also requires that your opponent has left his or her shield extended sufficiently that you can catch the edge.
- It is generally followed by an overhead strike to the head or body.
- When blocking a vertical or nearly vertical blow, if you have time to extend your shield in a nearly horizontal position, you can sweep it down across the top of your opponent's shield.
- This requires that you have enough time to extend your shield in the horizontal position without compromising your defense.
- It also requires that your opponent has left his or her shield extended sufficiently that you could catch the edge.
- It is generally followed by a forehand strike to the head.
- It is especially effective when used against an opponent fighting from their knees.

"Snatch"

This is one of my favorite techniques. Basically, it mimics the motion of a cat's paw when the cat is reaching forward to snatch at an object. It can be used either from a position where both fighters are immobile, or during a combination.

To execute the technique:

- Extend the leading edge of the shield as if performing a punch block towards a point one to two inches outside of the leading edge of your opponent's shield.
- Allow your shield edge to extend one to two inches past the edge of your opponent's shield.
- Quickly return your shield towards your body, curling it enough to catch the edge of your opponent's shield.
- Time your associated strike to be well on its way when your shield starts to return.

The motion of the shield hand, if it were not holding the shield, would be:

- Extend the fingers of the shield hand as it moves forward.
- Arch the wrist slightly back as the hand moves forward.
- As the hand passes the opponent's shield edge;
- Curl the hand slightly, but quickly, sideways to the inside, while curling the fingers closed.
- At the same time, quickly pull the hand back towards your chest.

As stated before, timing is critical on all offensive shield techniques. Also, the hooks tend to pull your opponent's blade forward, so look to your defense when using them.

Defense

If properly applied, with correct timing, both presses and hooks are difficult to counter directly. In both cases, once the technique is being applied, it is best to use less direct methods of opposition.

Presses

Rotate your body in the direction of the press. That is, if the press is to your sword side, rotate to your shield side, allowing the press to assist the rotation. At the same time strike in the direction of your rotation. Also, relax the forward push that you usually apply to your shield; allow it to go with the press

This combination of movements will free your shield somewhat, allowing you to perform an abbreviated block with the edge of your shield not being pressed. At the same time, it will move your weapon towards the point from which your opponent will likely be attacking.

If the press is straight towards you, and possibly towards the top of your shield, the same maneuver works. In this case, it's usually more effective to rotate towards your opponent's shield side, since his or her direction of movement will tend to be more towards their sword side. If the press is strong, it may require you to move your body back somewhat while disengaging your shield.

If you are fighting in a line, in a war situation where movement is not possible, react to the straight, over-the-top push by bending your knees to lower your center of mass, then push forward and up, emphasizing the hips, rather than the shoulders. At the same time, use your sword to block overhead strikes.

Hooks

As stated before hooks work directly or indirectly. In either case, try to allow the hook to move your shield as much as possible into some useful blocking position. If you are quick, this can take the form of a quick curl out, then towards your opponent's strike. If not, move your shield along with the direction of the hook towards either a high (usually) or low extended blocking position on your shield side, and use your sword to cover the rest. If you can back up at the same time, that is even better.

SECTION 6 - EXERCISES

MOVEMENT & BALANCE EXERCISES

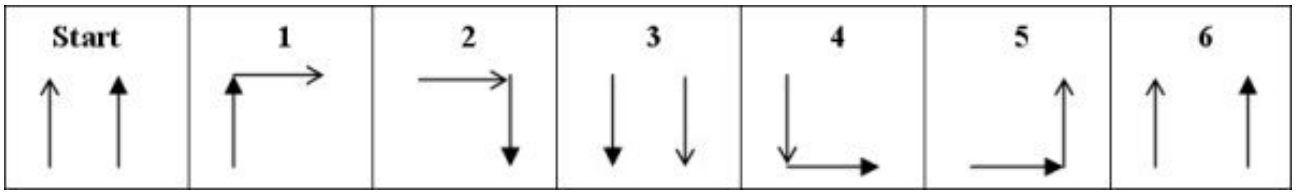
This is a much-neglected area of training. Without proper balance and movement, the techniques involving the weapons will be much harder to perform with any effect. Some of the suggested exercises are nothing like fighting, but they do teach some important aspect of movement and balance.

During all of these exercises, it is important to use the hands and arms for balance, and to lead or emphasize movements. If the hands and arms are used this way, they help train the upper and lower body to work together. Do not allow students to perform these exercises with their arms in the positions used to hold a sword and shield.

3-Step 'U' Walking. (Also using hands)

In this exercise, the student moves sideways, with their feet moving to form a "U" every three steps, with the opening of the "U" turning 180 degrees during the steps. The turn alternates clockwise and counter-clockwise. The steps are shown below in diagram 1. The arrow with the solid point is the right foot.

Diagram 1



In the starting position, the feet are parallel, both facing to the top of the page.

1. The right foot doesn't move. The left foot is placed horizontally, toe to the right, heel next to the toe of the right foot.
2. The left foot doesn't move. The right foot moves to a vertical position, toe down, heel next to the toe of the left foot.
3. The right foot doesn't move. The left foot moves to a vertical position, toe down, parallel to the right foot.

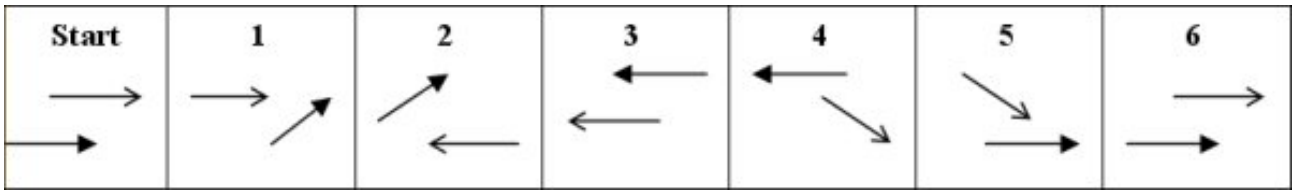
For steps 4, 5, & 6, repeat steps 1, 2, & 3, moving back to the starting position. In steps 4, 5, & 6, use the directions from the corresponding steps, but with the opposite feet.

6-Step Turn Walking. (Also using hands)

In this exercise, the student moves forward, turning in a circle every six steps. While moving, the student must remain balanced, with his or her weight evenly distributed. Be careful not to lean forward or backwards, and when executing a turn, pull the hands in towards the chest, so as not to acquire unwanted rotational momentum.

Diagram 2 below illustrates the positions of the feet during each of the six movements. The arrow with the solid end is the right foot.

Diagram 2



In the starting position, the feet should be in a normal fighting stance facing an imaginary opponent. The hands should be held in an approximation of a boxing or Karate guard position, with the left hand extended somewhat.

1. The right foot advances, ending in a position ahead of, and diagonally across towards the shield side of the left foot. The hands change position, with the right hand extending, and the left withdrawing.
2. The left foot swings around the back of the right foot to the sword side, ending more advanced towards the opponent than the right foot, with the left heel pointing at the opponent. The hands maintain the same guard position, and the student should continue to face the opponent as much as possible, viewing over the right shoulder.
3. The right foot moves straight towards the opponent, ending up parallel with the left foot, but more advanced toward the opponent. Both feet are pointing away from the opponent. The hands maintain the same guard position, and the student should continue to face the opponent as much as possible, viewing over the right shoulder.
4. This is the tricky move. The left foot swings as far as possible around counter-clockwise towards the opponent. During this motion, the body and head must turn around so that the opponent is being viewed over the left shoulder. During the turn, the hands are drawn in to the chest, and extended again into the guard position, left hand forward, as the turn is completed.
5. The right foot swings around counter-clockwise, advancing further than the left foot, with the toe pointing towards the opponent.
6. The left foot moves straight towards the opponent, ending up parallel to the right foot, but more advanced towards the opponent. This is the starting position.

   Emphasize smoothness of motion, controlled commitment, and proper balance. Speed is not a part of this exercise, but students should learn the technique well enough to move in an even flow.

Sideways Walking (low and high)

This is an important exercise, since the movement is the one most used in actual fighting.

When advancing towards (or retreating away from) an opponent, I will use both a slide step with the front foot (or back foot, in the case of a retreat), and a "striding" step with the back foot (or front foot, in the case of a retreat). I prefer this to the method generally used in modern fencing, where the front foot advances, and the back foot is recovered forward to the approximate former position of the front foot. I believe that it provides more range, and is more suitable to the "fighting in the round" format of armored combat.

However, when moving, I do not wish to commit to a particular motion with each step.

Therefore, I avoid stepping forward with my heels striking the ground first, and with my weight already moving onto the foot before it lands. Instead, the point of the foot that hits the ground first should be the rearward edge of the ball of the foot. (When the front foot steps forward, this is the inner edge. When the back foot steps forward, this is the outer edge.) I then slide my weight forward, as if the toes of the foot were gripping the ground and pulling me onto the foot.

It is also important to bend your front (or back) knee when your body passes over it on its way forward or back. If you don't, you will "bob" up and down with each step.

In like manner, it is important that you lead your movements with your hips, not your shoulders. This will allow you to avoid leaning. This is especially important while moving forward, for it avoids what I call the "Rocky Balboa" style, which is leading with your head.

Using these techniques will reduce unwanted commitments to particular directions or motions. In addition, the additional flex that the method allows to the foot and ankle can be useful in quickly changing directions, or retreating.

The exercise itself is easily performed. The best training aid for it is a four-in wide line painted on a flat surface (such as found on highways or in parking lots).

Figure 10a

Figure 10b

Figure 10c

Figure 10d

- Take a proper stance, with the line passing front-to-back between your feet. Your front toe should be touching the line on the shield side, and the heel of your rear foot should be either touching the line on the other side, or be up to four inches away from it. Please see Figure 10a, above.
- Keep your hands spread out to the sides for balance. Do not pretend that you are holding a sword or shield.
- Walk forward;
- Don't let your heels touch first. Keep most of your weight on the balls of your feet.
- Keep your feet at about a 30-degree angle from the line. Don't allow either foot to point straight along the line, or straight to the side.
- Keep your feet in their respective positions relative to the line. Don't cross over.

- Remember that the initial point of contact with the ground is the rearward edge of the ball of the foot. Roll your weight onto the ball of your foot as your body moves forward. Please see Figures 10b, and 10d above.
- Bend your front knee as your body passes over it. Avoid "bobbing". Please see Figure 10c, above.

Start doing the exercise in a normal fighting stance. When you're proficient, practice moving backwards, or when using a very low and wide stance.

Forward scallop walking, (low and high)

Figure 11a **Figure 11b** **Figure 11c** **Figure 11d** **Figure 11e**

This is an exercise that I use for people who are having trouble with over-committing forward when they step. The exercise requires that the weight be moved to the forward foot, with a pause before the step continues. This allows the student to re-establish his or her balance just before the step. During each step, the back foot, with its toe pointed and extended, moves along a curve away from the body to the side, then back to the front, where it touches the ground, toe first. (Don't worry about placing the foot as described in the Sideways Walking exercise.) Since the foot, through most of the step, is not in front of the body, the student is not as tempted to lean forward. Again, use the hands as described below, and do not pretend as if you're holding a sword and shield.

To perform the exercise:

- Start with the feet roughly parallel, with the shield foot in front at least the length of the foot. Please see Figure 11a, above.
- Use both arms to make a pushing motion, first reaching comfortably far back, and then coming forward close to the body at hip level. Please see Figure 11b, above.
- At the same time, push forward with the back foot, so that your weight is transferred to the front foot, and you come up onto your right toe.
- Pause.
- Point your sword hand at your right foot.
- At the same time, slightly extend your shield hand for balance.
- At the same time, slightly bend your front knee.
- Move the foot through the curve described above, pointing at it with your sword hand. Please see Figures 11c and 11d, above.
- When the foot reaches its destination;
- Pause.

- Tap the toe.
- Move your hands through the same pushing motion described above to move your weight onto the front foot, coming up on the toe of your back foot. Please see Figure 11e, above.
- Pause.
- Point at the back foot, and continue as above.

Power Pushing

Figure 12a **Figure 12b** **Figure 12c** **Figure 12d**

This is an exercise that I use to help students to learn to focus power through visualization combined with physical movement. In general, the exercise involves moving forward in a "herringbone" pattern, moving from a back stance to a forward stance on each step, while reaching back and pulling a visualized ball of energy past the side of the hip, and pushing it into the distance. It is important to move as if you are really moving a large, glowing ball, which is not heavy, but has some resistance to being moved forward. Once it starts going, imagine that it accelerates.

To perform the exercise:

- Start in a normal stance.
- Visualize the air behind you becoming thick, and glowing with energy.
- Turn your head and upper body towards a point about 45 degrees to the right of front. At the same time: (Please see Figure 12a, above.)
- Shift your weight to your left foot until about 80% of your weight is on it.
- Extend your left leg slightly, so that you stand up a little higher.
- Pull your right foot in slightly, so that the knee is bent, and only the toe touches.
- Reach your arms back to your left side to grab a ball of the energy that you have visualized behind you.
- As they go back, both hands should quickly move as high as possible, then, with both hands open with the palms facing forward, scoop down to gather the energy.
- The hands should continue down and forward with the curve, pushing the visualized ball of energy past the left hip. (Please see Figure 12b, above.) As the hands move forward:
- The body's weight should start to shift forward toward that 45-degree angle.
- The right leg should extend in that same direction
- This should continue, with the weight of the body moving forward as the ball of energy is pushed towards that 45-degree angle

- The left leg should extend to help with the push.
- The right leg should bend as the weight moves onto it. You should end up in a forward stance, with about 60% of your weight on the right foot.
- As your arms extend, the palms should remain open to the 45-degree angle, and the both hands should rotate clockwise until the fingertips are pointed up, at almost full extension. Please see Figure 12c, above.
- As the arms finish their extension, which should be at the same time the weight shift is completed, push the energy towards the horizon. Please see Figure 12d, above.
- Start again at the "Turn your head and upper body---" step, and do the same thing towards the 45-degree angle direction on the other side of forward (315 degrees, if front is 360).

SECTION 7 - SWORD EXERCISES

Pell Work

This is basically practicing striking techniques against a padded pole, or other target.

Most pell work should be done at a slow speed. It is useful to vary the speed, but full speed work should be minimal until you have techniques mastered. Your body cannot learn the techniques with any precision if the training is done at full speed. The movements will likely feel better if you do them quickly, but this is because the speed masks the mistakes.

The rule should be to learn slow, polish fast. If you try to learn fast, you end up with very polished errors.

Once you have learned to execute the techniques properly at slow speed, start increasing the speed and power. You will find that once you start applying power, the movements of the technique will become distorted. This may require returning to slow movement several times to modify the technique until it is useable fast. These returns to slow speed can be for just a few blows, if that accomplishes your purpose.

In addition to single-strike techniques, the pell can be very useful in developing combinations. The same guidelines concerning slow and fast practice apply here. When you are learning combinations, you may wish to actually write them down, so that you won't forget them from practice to practice.

It is also useful to combine shield work into your combination practice. Eventually, you can add movement, as if you were actually fighting an opponent. I suggest:

- Make six marks on the pell, three on each side, with one pair each at the temples, ribs, and lower thigh. Strips of colored tape or cloth are good, since they can be moved to provide varied targets.
- In addition to single-strike techniques, create a list of combinations, specifying targets, returns, and the type of blow being struck. Use the marks as targets for the blows of the combination.
- When you start using a shield with the combinations, block towards each of the marks in a determined order. The sequence of blocks can be the same as that of the strikes, or towards the opposite mark, or some more complicated sequence.
- Perform your 'sets' at least two times each. If you are doing more than two of each, it is better to go through each set two times, and then go back through again, rather than doing four of each in a row.

The type of pell can vary considerably. A padded pole is the norm. However, I have seen pells constructed of automobile tires, modified and tied together to have arms, legs, and a head, as will as the body. I have used pells that incorporated a shield. A heavy rope, suspended from above, and weighted at the bottom, works fine, and can be used in conjunction with mirrors that allow you to see what you are doing.

One simple, but very effective version that I once used was a pole with several tires fastened to it. The tires were not fastened flat against the pole, but were attached at a point on their rims, so that they stuck out from the pole. They were fastened at different heights, and on different sides of the pole. By positioning myself correctly, I could set up opportunities to practice strikes at odd angles.

Butterfly Walk

Figure 13a

Figure 13b

Figure 13c

Figure 13d

Figure 13e

Figure 13f

Figure 13g

Figure 13h

Figure 13i

This exercise combines stepping and swinging the sword. A variant can be done using a pell, without walking. It provides a format in which to practice two techniques:

- The hip movement, timing, and body movement integration on returns and swings
- Accuracy

The basic movement of the exercise requires sword strikes to be made, alternating forehand and backhand strikes, both moving down and across the body at a 45-degree angle, passing through a target point at about eye-level.

"Teardrop" returns are executed to both sides after the strikes. It is important to emphasize that the path of the sword should be kept outside of the shoulders, and the tip of the sword should be above the hand after the sword crosses the horizontal, while pointing back.

The steps occur with the leg on the side to which the return is being made, timed to start when the sword hand reaches the area of the hip, after the strike. The steps act as a timing device, to practice moving the hip forward at the proper time in the backswing.

In addition, the movement of the sword is slowed during the strikes as the sword hand passes through the target. During this time, it is necessary to guide the blade so that all of it, from pommel to tip, passes through the target. This builds accuracy.

Of course, as in all slow exercises, the movements must be exaggerated in that you must reach as far back and up as possible on the returns, and have the sword, on its forward paths, cross over your

shoulders at a point even with the top of your head. Also, move the shield hand as if to pull and push the sword (without touching it). Do not mimic the position used to hold a shield.

To perform the exercise:

- Start in a normal stance, but extend the sword arm back and up to point the tip of the sword back and up, nearly vertically, and at an angle about 30 degrees to the sword side of straight back. Please see Figure 13a, above.
- Cross your shield arm over your chest as if you will be pulling the sword with that hand also. Don't touch the sword.
- Start a strike towards the target (the bridge of your imaginary opponent's nose), leading with the hips and knees, and pulling across your chest with your shield arm. As the strike progresses, the shield arm should continue down and back at about the same angle of the sword strike. Please see Figure 13b, above.
- Just as the sword hand is about to reach the target, slow the movement considerably so that you can move the hand and the entire length of the sword precisely through the target. This will help increase your accuracy. Please see Figure 13c, above.
- As the sword tip passes through the target, go into a backhand version of the basic side (teardrop) return:
- The sword should move down past your left hip (Please see Figure 13d, above).
- As the sword hand reaches the hip, start a step with the shield leg, and start the forward motion of the hip. The step should finish as the sword starts to rise up again.
- The forward rotation of the shield hip should complete when the sword passes back forward over the shield shoulder.
- The sword circles back and up
- As the sword moves back and up, it is necessary to lift with the thumb, and curl it, and the hand, in a clockwise direction. This not only lifts the blade, but keeps the tip from moving across in back of you towards the sword side.
- The tip of the blade should be higher than the hand after the sword passes through the horizontal.
- The shield hand should start pushing forward as the sword starts to rise past the horizontal.
- The sword is then pulled forward for a backhand blow through the same target.
- As the sword hand moves forward over the shield shoulder, the hand should be, if possible, as high as the top of your head. Please see Figure 13e, above.
- The sword tip should be outside and above the sword hand.
- Continue the strike towards the target, again slowing the movement as the sword hand approaches the target. Please see Figure 13f, above.
- Carefully move the sword hand and entire length of the sword through the target, as during the forehand strike. Please see Figure 13g, above.
- As the sword tip passes through the target, go into the basic side (teardrop) return to the sword side (Please see Figure 13h, above).
- The sword should move down past your right hip
- As the sword hand reaches the hip, start a step with the sword leg, and start the forward motion of the hip. The step should finish as the sword starts to rise up again.
- The forward rotation of the sword hip should complete when the sword passes back forward over the sword shoulder.
- The sword circles back and up (Please see Figure 13i, above).

- As the sword moves back and up, it is necessary to lift with the index finger, and curl the little finger, and the hand, in a clockwise direction. This not only lifts the blade, but keeps the tip from moving across in back of you towards the sword side.
- The tip of the blade should be higher than the hand after the sword passes through the horizontal.
- The shield hand should start pulling forward as the sword starts to rise past the horizontal.
- The sword is then pulled forward for a backhand blow through the same target.
- As the sword hand moves forward over the sword shoulder, the hand should be, if possible, as high as the top of your head.
- The sword tip should be outside and above the sword hand.
- Continue the strike towards the target, again slowing the movement as the sword hand approaches the target.
- Repeat as before.

    Take care to:

    - Keep the sword moving at a constant rate throughout the exercise except while slowing for the accuracy portion.
    - Keep moving between repetitions. Do not stop.
    - Keep the sword tip should be moving in a large, bent, figure eight (actually an infinity sign). At no time, however, should the tip of the sword move inside your shoulders while the blade is behind you.
    - Keep the angle of the sword strikes should be about 45 degrees.
    - Exaggerate the pulling and pushing with your other hand.

If you use the exercise standing with a pell instead of walking, you must concentrate on starting the hip movement as the sword hand reaches the hip while moving back.

A variation can be done by starting the walk/swing with the sword arm across your chest (tip still pointing up and back) so that the first swing is a backhand, while the opposite foot is stepping. Otherwise, the movements are the same. This provides more of an awareness of the contributions of the shield side of the body to the power of the strikes.

Return Analog

Figure 14a

Figure 14b

Figure 14c

Figure 14d

Figure 14e

This is a very useful exercise in teaching the basic movements and timing of the side or "teardrop" returns. The motions are very formalized, but correspond very well to the movements and timing of the actual return. This formalization provides very specific and easily identifiable points at which the constituent motions are started and stopped.

The exercise is taught in two phases. The first phase is only concerned with the movements of the arms and hands. In the second phase, training in the timing of the hip movements and power application is added. Students should master the first phase before adding the movement of the second phase.

The starting position is as follows, and must be returned to between each repetition of the exercise. Please see Figure 14a, above.

- Have the feet parallel, and shoulder width. Keep the knees unlocked, but not bent.
- Cross the shield arm across the chest, keeping the elbow in close to the side of the body. Have the extended fingertips touch the front of the sword shoulder.
- Cross the sword arm across the chest, keeping the elbow in close to the side of the body. Have the sword hand just under, and inside of the shield shoulder.
- Point the tip of the sword up and out, along the direction of the forearm.

To perform the first phase of the exercise:

- Start sliding both hands down your chest. As they move down, they will move towards the center of the body. Please see Figure 14b, above.
- Keep the elbows in tight to the sides of the body. If necessary, allow the hands to move out from the body to allow the elbows to remain stationary.
- As the hands move down, turn them palm down. The blade of the sword will slide along the shield side of the body as the hands move down.
- Start breathing in.
- When the hands reach a point just below your waist, and the sword hand is directly above the shield hand, (this is the farthest downward extension): (Please see Figure 14c, above.)
- Start curling the little fingers of both hands strongly towards the base of the respective thumbs, as close to the wrist as possible.
- At the same time, start turning the thumbs out, so that the hands start to move from palm down to palm forward.
- Start moving the hands, with the arms remaining extended, out and up. Keep them in the plane defined by the shoulders. As the hands pass the shoulders on their way up, the alms should complete their turn to forward. <u>This is the first critical timing point.</u>
- The hands, with the arms extended, should continue to move out and up to an angle about 30 to 45 degrees above horizontal. Please see Figure 14d, above.
- Complete your inward breath.
- The sword should be pointed up and out, in approximately the same direction as the arm, but at a slightly more vertical angle. The tip of the sword should be well above the hand. <u>This is the second critical timing point.</u>
- Move your arms down and in towards their original starting position. Please see Figure 14e, above.
- Start breathing out.
- Start moving the elbows first.

- As the elbows start in and down, start curling the fingers towards the inside, causing the palms to turn in, then towards the rear. This rotation should be completed when the sword has moved about one third of the way down. This will usually occur naturally.
- Pull the blade down its length, causing the tip to follow in the same path as the hilt. Be careful not to let the tip lead, or try to lead, the hand.
- Allow your hands to cross as they move in.
- Stop the movement when they are in their original starting positions.
- Finish breathing out when your hands reach the original starting position.
- The only difference between this and the starting position, is that the sword is pointing up to the sword side, while in the starting position, the sword is pointing up to the shield side.
- Move the sword so that the tip points to the shield side, and then repeat the exercise.

Figure 14f

To perform the second phase of the exercise:

This phase is the hand and arm movements of the first phase combined with a 90-degree rotation of the body towards the shield side. The feet should not swivel during this movement, but it is acceptable if they turn slightly. The important aspect of this rotation is that:

- It should begin at the first critical timing point, which is when the hands start to move out.
- It should end at the second critical timing point, which is when the hands reach their farthest upward position. The position shown in Figure 14f is the equivalent of the one shown in Figure 14d, above, but after the 90-degree turn.

This closely approximates the timing of the power application of the hips during the teardrop return.

I have found that good precision in performing the exercise will be rewarded in improvements in the performance of the actual return. In addition, incorrect performance of the exercise will allow the instructor to identify certain problems in the execution of the technique, itself. Some of these are as follows:

- If the elbow moves out from the body when the hands are moving down:
- During the actual return, the student is likely to pull the sword back more with the arm than the body.
- This will cause the sword hand to be closer to the body than the elbow when it is time to move the sword up and farther back.
- When this occurs, the sword can only be moved by 'flipping' the wrist over, causing the hand to turn palm up, and the blade to move strongly across the back of the fighter to the shield side. This wastes motion and time.
- If the tip of the sword is lower than the hand when the sword is moving out and up:
- During the actual return, the student will find that the tip drags as the sword moves up and forward.
- This will limit the subsequent strike to angles close to vertical.
- If the tip of the sword leads, or starts to lead the sword hand when the sword is moving from the highest position back to the starting point:
- During the actual return, there will be a "wobble" in the blade as the tip adjusts from pointing to the shield side back to moving around the sword side during the forward motion of the sword on the subsequent strike.

- This is not serious if the subsequent strike is forehand, but it does slightly delay the sword.
- If the subsequent strike is an overhead blow, considerable power will be lost.

Return Timing

Figure 15a

Figure 15b

Figure 15c

Figure 15d

Figure 15e

This is a rather odd exercise, but it is useful in learning the proper timing for hip rotation and duration while executing the teardrop return and the subsequent strike. As mentioned before, the timing of the start and duration of the hip rotation the snap, side return, and subsequent strikes is critical.

The exercise consists the student standing with his or her feet parallel, and swinging the sword forward and back in a U-shaped path in a plane in front of the student. The sword hand is lowered and flipped at the lowest point in the swords path, as it passes directly in front of the student. The sword hand is raised and moved to the front or rear as the sword reaches the tips of the "U". During this motion, the hips are rotated in the opposite direction of the sword's travel. The hips face forward at the low point in the "U".

When teaching the exercise, I find it useful to teach it in three phases.

- In the first phase, the sword hand moves directly up and down in a vertical path in front of the student, flipping over at the lowest point. The sword flips from side to side, with the tip first pointing left, then right. The path should be in a vertical plane.
- During the second phase, I add the hip rotation.
- During the third phase, I add the movement of the sword hand respectively to the left and right as the sword moves in those directions.

  To start the exercise:

  Stand upright with your feet roughly parallel, or with the toes pointed slightly out, or with the toes pointed slightly to the shield side. Parallel is best to start, and pointed slightly to the shield side is best once you've mastered the movements.
- Hold your sword so that the blade is horizontal and pointing left, the sword hand is as high as your chin, and the sword arm is partially extended so that the sword hand is palm down, and 12 to 16 inches in front of your face.

Phase 1:

- Drop the sword hand straight down.
- When the sword arm is nearly fully extended down;
- Flip the hand over, turning the palm up, curling in with the little finger, and lifting with the index finger.
- Allow the tip of the sword to swing around the bottom of the "U" towards your right side.

- Raise the sword hand back up to the starting position, with the palm up.
- While the hand rises, the sword tip should swing to the right.
- The sword should swing up to horizontal.
- Drop the sword hand straight down.
- When the sword arm is nearly fully extended down;
- Flip the hand over, turning the palm down, curling in and lifting with the thumb.
- Allow the tip of the sword to swing around the bottom of the "U" towards your left side.
- Raise the sword hand back up to the starting position, with the palm down.
- While the hand rises, the sword tip should swing to the left.
- The sword should swing up to horizontal.
- Repeat.

Phase 2:

- Modify the starting position used in phase 1 so that your hips and upper body are turned to the right. Do not swivel your feet.
- Start performing the exercise as described in phase 1, except;
- Each time that the sword hand flips over at the bottom of the "U", rotate your body to the other direction. So, when the hand is at its highest points, you should be facing in the direction opposite to the one in which the sword is pointing.

  Phase 3:
- Modify the starting position used in phase 2 so that while your hips and upper body are turned to the right, your sword arm is extended across your chest to the shield side. Do not swivel your feet. Please see Figure 15a, above.
- Start performing the exercise as described in phase 2, except;
- Instead of dropping your sword hand straight down, bring it down and towards the direction in which the sword is moving. The sword and both arms should pass through the same position at the bottom of the "U". Please see Figures 15b and 15d, above.
- At the top of the "U" to the sword side, your sword arm should be fully extended, and roughly horizontal. Please see Figure 15c, above.
- When the sword moves back in the opposite direction, move the sword hand down and across in that direction. Please see Figures 15b and 15d, above.
- At the top of the "U" to the shield side, your sword arm should be extended horizontally across your chest towards the shield side. Please see Figures 15a and 15e, above.
- At all times, swing your shield arm in the opposite direction of your sword arm.

SECTION 8 - SHIELD EXERCISES

Shield Hook

Exercise 1

Figure 16a

Figure 16b

Figure 16c

Figure 16d

The first exercise is to move the fingers and hand of the shield arm in the slow movements of the "snatch" version.

- Start in a fighting stance without a weapon or shield. Have the fingers of the shield hand closed. Please see Figure 16a, above.
- Position yourself in front of an upright pole (one about the size of a rattan sword blade is best). The pole should be close enough so that when you extend your shield arm, your fingers extend completely past the pole.
- Leaving the shield elbow at your side for as long as possible, slowly extend the shield arm, and at the same time uncurl and extend the fingers. Please see Figure 16b, above. Aim at a point just slightly to the left of the pole. Time the extending of the fingers so that they become fully extended just as they pass the pole. Please see Figure 16c, above.
- At the same time, extend your sword arm back towards the position normally reached at the rearmost extension of an overhead return. it should reach that point just as the fingers of the shield hand are fully extended.
- Withdraw the shield hand, curling the fingers around the pole. If you have a training partner to hold the pole, you can pull it back towards you. Please see Figure 16d, above.
- At the same time, start moving the sword hand forward in a strike.

Exercise 2

The second exercise is to "snatch" small objects out of the air with the movements of the "snatch" version.

- Start in a fighting stance without a weapon or shield. Have the fingers of the shield hand closed.
- Have a friend throw small, rubber balls, or tight balls of paper gently at you, towards different targets. Have the friend use an underhand lob. Don't practice with rocks if you value your knuckles.
- As they come in range, reach out and grab them. Do not sweep through them, but rather reach out, opening your hand so that the fingertips just miss the ball, close your hand around it, and move quickly back.

SECTION 9 - INTEGRATED EXERCISES

Alternate Sword/Shield/Step

Figure 17a

Figure 17b

Figure 17c

Figure 17d

Figure 17e

This exercise is useful when teaching a student:

- To focus power in both their strikes and their blocks
- To utilize proper technique when performing the punch block, and returning the shield after the block.

The exercise is performed using a sword and shield, and consists of four separate actions, sequentially performed as the student moves forward.

The keys in this exercise are proper technique, overemphasis on power and focus, and isolation of the techniques.

To start the exercise, take a fighting stance with sword and shield, (Please see Figure 17a, above.) as described previously. The steps of the exercise are as follows:

1. Execute a high forehand strike towards the head of an imaginary opponent. Please see Figure 17b, above.
    - At the same time, pull in your shield towards your shield shoulder, keeping it high. Move so that if you did not have a shield, the extended fingertips of your shield hand would touch your collarbone at the farthest back point.
    - Try to make the forehand strike as focused as possible, moving the sword hand directly towards the target.
    - Insure that your front knee bends, and that your weight moves slightly forward to accentuate the power of the blow.
    - Do not swing full force. The movements should be crisp and quick, but swing too hard will injure your arm.
    - The sword should remain extended, and the shield should remain pulled back until step 3.
2. Take a step with your sword foot. Please see Figure 17c, above.
    - Keep your feet moving on separate, parallel lines. Do not allow them to cross.
    - When moving your foot forward, first shift your balance to the shield foot, while moving your sword foot forward and towards your shield foot.
    - Then continue forward and out with your sword foot in a manner similar to the Power Pushing exercise.
3. Perform a punch block accompanied by an overhead return. Please see Figure 17d, above.
    - At this time, the shield foot will be back. This allows the student to accentuate the hip rotation with a leg thrust when applying power.

- I find it useful to have the student first "cock" their shield hip by rotating it slightly back. This further emphasizes the power application. This is useful as part of the exercise, but do not do it in combat.
- Insure that your front knee bends, and that your weight moves slightly forward to accentuate the power of the block.
- The shield should remain extended, and the sword should remain pulled back in the overhead return until step 1 is repeated.

4. Take a step with the shield foot. Please see Figure 17e, above.
   - Keep your feet moving on separate, parallel lines. Do not allow them to cross.
   - When moving your foot forward, first shift your balance to the sword foot, while moving your shield foot forward and towards your sword foot.
   - Then continue forward and out with your shield foot in a manner similar to the Power Pushing exercise.

The steps are then repeated. Subsequent strikes are performed with the sword starting from the overhead return position. (See description, above.) Do not return the sword to the sword shoulder at any point. Subsequent shield returns are performed with the shield starting in the extended block position.

Aside from incorrect technique, the most frequent errors are:

- Straightening the front leg when performing the blocks and strikes
- Dropping the shield lower when returning it after blocks
- Striking at a lower target than eye-level
- Not coming to a motionless "set" position between the steps

Once the exercise is mastered, it can be useful to perform it while taking backward instead of forward steps. Be careful to insure that the student is in a proper stance after each step before continuing.

Two-on-One

This is a very useful exercise, and it provides an opportunity to practice many things:

- Power application footwork
- Target acquisition.
- Punch blocks and overhead returns
- Integration of all the other points.

The exercise requires two assistants, along with the student being trained. All should have swords and shields. The starting position is best described mapped onto a marked parking space in a parking lot.

- Have the student being trained assume an "on-guard" position at the end of the parking space, centered between the lines.
- Have the two trainers about two feet in front of the student, but outside of the lines. This should be a very flat isosceles triangle.

In general, the student will proceed forward in a "herringbone" pattern of steps (similar to the motions of a speed skater). The student will strike at the shield of the trainer on the left, and block the strikes delivered by the trainer on the right. The trainers maintain their position relative to the student as he or she moves forward. As the exercise is mastered, the speed can be varied.

To perform the exercise:

- Assume the starting position as described, above.

- The student should take a sliding step with the shield foot, forward and sideways towards the trainer on the left.
- At the same time, deliver a forehand strike towards shield of the trainer.
- The trainer should keep a relative position such that their shield is in range, but they are not.
- The student should have oriented his or her body and direction of movement towards the trainer.
- At the same time, the student should pull in his or her shield, not allowing it to drop down, and keeping it tight against their upper, left chest. The top edge should be very close to the student's chin.
- As soon as the strike hits, the student should look towards the trainer on the right, focusing on the trainer's sword hand.
- At nearly the same time, the student's weight should be transferred to the shield foot, while the sword foot is brought forward and in towards the shield foot.
- The motion of the sword foot should continue in an arc forward and out towards the trainer on the right.
- At the same time, the student should execute a punch block to the sword of the trainer on the right.
- The student should have oriented his or her body and direction of movement towards the trainer on the right.
- At the same time, the student should execute an overhead return.
- (The trainer on the right should not be swinging fast, or with any power. The idea is to have the sword moving and part way through a strike when the student looks at, and starts to move towards, the trainer on the right. It is the trainer's responsibility not to hit the student.)
- As the execution of the block is completed, the student should look back towards the trainer on the left.
- At nearly the same time, the student's weight should be transferred to the sword foot, while the shield foot is brought forward and in towards the sword foot.
- The motion of the shield foot should continue in an arc forward and out towards the trainer on the left.
- At the same time, the student should be executing a strike towards the shield of the trainer on the left.
- The trainer should keep a relative position such that their shield is in range, but they are not.
- The student should have oriented his or her body and direction of movement towards the trainer on the left.
- At the same time, the student should pull in his or her shield, not allowing it to drop down, and keeping it tight against their upper, left chest. The top edge should be very close to the student's chin.
- Continue to repeat the sequence, above.

The most common problem is that the student will not step towards and orient his or her body towards the trainers on alternate steps. This will result in the student having to reach across their body to perform the blocks and strikes. A lesser problem is that the student will move more towards one trainer than the other. If this occurs, the movement of the exercise will be in a curved line towards one side.

Slow Work

Proper use of slow work is the cornerstone of this teaching system. If done properly, it teaches everything from basic techniques to the esoteric perception/focus arts. If done improperly, it will ruin a fighter's style.

Nearly all learning of techniques takes place during slow work. You should learn slow, polish fast. Polishing before techniques are learned will result in polished errors. Also, many of the descriptions of techniques and exercises in this document are designed for slow practice.

When practicing, it is not sufficient to simply slow the speed of the technique. The motions themselves change when the speed slows, becoming exaggerated and wider. It is necessary to mention this, since students may object that a practice technique would not work in combat because it would place them in a poor position, would move the shield too far back, etc. The answer to this objection is that the slow practice trains muscular action and cooperation, and this requires movements which are exaggerated and wide, since that's what the motions look like when they are done slowly.

Consider the example of cheap, martial arts movies. It is the practice in these movies to speed up the film to make the actors appear faster. It is always possible to tell when this speeding-up is done, since the movements do not look natural. It is always possible to tell when the film has been slowed down, for the same reason. In reality, a technique performed at different speeds is performed with different movements.

The training exercises are attempts to simulate the proper movements of the technique for the speed (slow) at which the greatest learning occurs. Some adjustments must be made when performing at full speed, but not many. The only one that comes to mind is that the position of the shield during sparring must be kept more closely to the front when moving at faster speeds. The motion of the sword naturally moves in closer to the center of rotation (preferably the body) as the speed increases.

- It is absolutely vital that movement during the exercise be very slow, and as uniform as possible, not just for the sword, but for the whole body. There are instances in intermediate and advanced training where faster movement is desirable, but never when learning or perfecting new techniques.
- You should move the sword rather than swing it. In other words, when you stop your hand, the sword should stop. There should be no residual motion that requires stopping.
- The movement should be slow enough that you do not feel especially rushed, even when doing difficult or exaggerated movements.
- The better you get at the exercise, the more time you will seem to have, since your movements are more efficient, and flow together better. The temptation will be to speed up.
- Movements should be exaggerated, and performed with the whole body. Movements tend to move in towards the center of rotation while the sword moves towards its tip when the movement as a whole speeds up. Therefore you must keep your hand higher, farther back, etc during slow work.
- Since there is no momentum to keep the sword moving, you must consciously force it to move through the proper paths.
- Remember, when stepping, move the shield foot while your weight is on the sword foot during a strike. Move the sword foot while your weight is on the shield foot during a return.
- Don't hit hard or push into your strikes. Just barely touch your target, then go immediately into a return technique. This prevents the development of the habit of "posing" when you strike.
- You are responsible for not striking your opponent. If he or she looks away at just the wrong time, it is your job to keep from landing a blow.
- Don't extend the wrist forward at the end of a strike. Keep the wrist rigid, with the sword maintaining its starting position relative to the arm.

- You must strive to keep the techniques "real".
- Don't change the directions of blows in mid swing, if you couldn't do it in full speed.
- Don't step forward with a swing. Stepping before or after is fine, but if you do it at the same time in full speed, your blow won't have any power.
- If you miss, don't stop the blade as if you hit. Continue with the swing, and move into a return.
- Emphasize a backswing. Your return techniques should be exaggerates so that the sword hand moves back as far as possible.
- Don't get caught up in "winning" the slow practice. It is not a fight; it is a practice. You don't have an opponent; you have a partner.
- Again, don't change speeds.

  Don't worry about keeping the shield in front of you, or your stance in a proper open/closed position. The idea is to make your body flow with your weapons. It is relatively easy to get things tightened up later.

Without Shield

The emphasis is on rhythm, movement and flow. It is not simply fighting while holding an imaginary shield, but rather fighting without a shield. Don't hold your shield hand in the position in which you would normally hold a shield. Rather you should move it as if you were pulling and pushing your sword, or starting direction changes with your body.

- In the basic and intermediate forms of this exercise, the target of your sword should be the sword of your opponent.
- Swings should alternate from forehand to backhand on every stroke. In the early attempts, you should adhere to a rigid, simple pattern of swings and returns.
- Later, when rhythm and proper movement has been established, the exercise can become more free form. In these later stages, an important objective is to move as much as possible between swings, and to swing from many different positions and angles, but still maintaining the rhythm and the alternation of forehand and backhand strikes.

Rhythm

- Especially in the beginning the emphasis is on performing in a set rhythm. This is to allow you to notice when you are unintentionally varying the speed of your motion.
- Even if your sword strikes are in rhythm, it is a common error to move the sword too fast during part of the swing, and too slow during another. The fast part is usually during the backswing.
- This is often accompanied by an unrealistic change in the direction of the swing.
- Later, in the very advanced version, changing the rhythm is one of the objects of exercise. By then you should know some of the techniques by which you can accomplish this change in a realistic manner.

Movement

- When you move, it is important to coordinate the movement of your upper and lower body.
- The movement of your legs should drive the movements of your body, and both should be coordinated with the motion of your arm and sword.
- Your entire body and sword should move as an entity. It is not enough to simply move slowly with your arm, while the body moves at normal speed.

Double-back Return

Figure 18a

Figure 18b

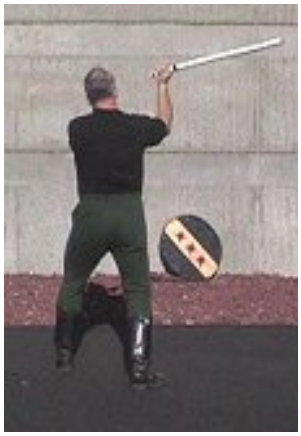
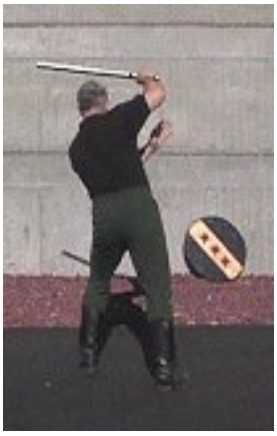


Figure 18c

Figure 18d



This return is useful during some slow work, and can be done quickly, but its application in full-speed fighting is limited. It is not necessary to learn this technique in the early stages.

To perform the technique;

- Swing a high blow just over the head of your opponent.
- Keep the blade swinging in a high, horizontal plane as you perform the standard overhead return. It is a common error to drop the sword tip as it moves behind your body. Please see Figure 18a, above.
- At the time where the sword crosses behind your head, the sword arm should be extended almost straight out from the shoulder, and bent up at a right angle at the elbow. Keep it there.
- Just as the sword tip gets to where it is pointing straight out sideways from your sword shoulder. Please see Figure 18b, above.
- Move the sword-elbow forward, at the same time as you
- Drop your sword hand slightly down and back
- Start the forward rotation of your sword hip
- Lean towards your shield shoulder
- Allow the sword tip to drop. Relaxing the last three fingers of your sword hand should help, but it is not necessary. Please see Figure 18c, above.
- The sword will curve downwards from its horizontal plane into a vertical plane that is roughly parallel to your back.
- The sword moves in this vertical place across your back towards the shield side.
- As the tip starts to rise up towards your shield shoulder, guide it up and over with your sword arm, directing it to a target. Please see Figure 18d, above.
- Continue the forward of your sword hip.

Blindfolded

- This is a very structured form of slow work. In this form of the exercise, only one partner is trained. The other functions as a trainer.
- Start normal slow work (without shield).

- Once the rhythm has been established, have the person to be trained close his or her eyes while continuing to swing.
- The 'trainer' need not continue to move as if doing slow work. (It is better for his or her own training if it is possible). The responsibility of the trainer is to meet the sword of the trainee, as if regular slow work was still progressing. It is useful to allow a miss from time to time.

Timing/Distance (very advanced)

This type of slow work is more like dancing than fighting. It is performed without shields, but the sword may not be used for blocking. Your partner's swings must be avoided by dodging.

The objective is to execute a strike that would impact on your partner that he or she could not dodge or avoid, while not being struck at the same time or soon afterwards.

This can be achieved by varying the timing of your swings, and precisely controlling distance. This does not mean that you can swing at different speeds. It means that you must vary the time it takes to complete a backswing and forward swing. This is done by varying the length of the path that the sword follows.

- The movement must be fairly slow, and very controlled.
- Movement must be constant, and at the same speed at all times. Don't ever return your sword to your shoulder during the exercise.
- Don't keep your shield hand in the position to hold a shield. Use it to lead the sword hand through maneuvers.
- Defense is stressed. A double kill is a failed exercise, not a draw.
- Vary the timing of your strikes.
- Stepping away during a backswing lengthens the time between strikes.
- Stepping forward during the forward swing shortens the time between strikes.
- Straightening your arm during the backswing and forward swing lengthens the time between strikes.
- Bending your arm during the backswing and forward swing shortens the time between strikes.
- Remember, when stepping, move the shield foot while your weight is on the sword foot during a strike. Move the sword foot while your weight is on the shield foot during a return.

To start the exercise:

- While in a normal fighting stance, the first partner's sword should be extended at waist level towards the second partner. The shield hand should be back and up.
- While in a normal fighting stance, the second partner should have his or her sword extended up and back. The shield arm should be extended forward and pointing down towards the waist of the first partner.
- The starting distance should be just outside of sword range.

To perform the exercise:

- The second partner executes a strike towards the first partner.
- At the same time, the first partner moves the sword into a return, and moves his or her body to dodge the strike.
- As the tip of the second partner's sword passes in front of him, the first partner's sword should be at the farthest rearward point in a return.
- The first partner continues into a strike towards the second partner.

- At the same time, the second partner moves the sword into a return, and moves his or her body to dodge the strike.
- Repeat the above, with lots of movement.

With Shield

Slow work with a shield can emphasize many things. It is not just slow fighting. It should be used to train different skills at different times. Once the exercise is comfortable, the trainer can have the student concentrate on one of several things, such as using deep returns, keeping the shield up, defense, etc.

Rhythm

Especially at first, fighters should strive for rhythm in this exercise; as in a 1, 2, 3, 4 cadence. This, coupled with the slow movement, allow the fighter time and a framework in which to learn the basic techniques.

Movement

- Once the rhythm is established, and techniques can be performed at a rudimentary level, start the fighters moving around one another.
- At the beginning, just coordinating the feet and hands is hard enough. Emphasize being in a position to supply power to the sword when swinging. Essentially, move the sword foot with the backswing, and adjust the shield foot during the forward swing. This guideline is not hard and fast.
- As the fighter gains proficiency, emphasize movement for the purpose of getting a better angle from which to strike. Remember, when you swing a sword, it can be blocked by a shield moving towards the center of rotation. If all swings come from one place, they become relatively easy to block. If moving and twisting your body can move the center of rotation out to either side, (or perhaps up and down), the swings will be much more difficult to block.

Slot Work

This is a technique that should be incorporated into slow work starting with low-medium skill level, and increasing as the skill level grows. It is basically the practice of aiming for 'slots', or targets unprotected by the shield.

- The more useful slots are those that are difficult to protect at all.
- Refer to the 'butterfly walk' under training techniques.

Note the part about the hand passing through the target.

This is the key. The sword follows the hand, so the hand must move through the slots, and the sword must follow precisely. Once the hand has moved around the space protected by the shield, the sword will generally also avoid the shield.

It is possible to have the sword not precisely follow the hand. This is achieved by moving the sword elbow to the left or right (and up or down) during the strike to cause the angle of the blade to change during the stroke. What is happening is that there is force being applied to the sword in two directions at once. The main force is moving the sword towards the target. The other is rotating it around its center of mass. Neither interferes with the other, but they combine into a different effect that would be possible with either acting along.

SECTION 10 - APPENDICES

APPENDIX A - To find a proper stance

To find a proper stance, follow this sequence:

- Draw a line towards your opponent.
  - Place the shield foot toe on one side of the line, touching the line.
  - Place the sword foot heel on the other side of the line, also touching it.
  - Keep the feet parallel, about 30 degrees from front, and about shoulder-width apart.
- Draw a perpendicular line, just behind the back heel.
  - Move the back foot about four inches out along this line. Maintain the 30-degree angle.
  - Fighters with a power problem will need to move this foot about six inches to allow for more forward rotation. When this is the case, the upper body must rotate slightly clockwise (for right-handed fighters) to place the shield in a good protective position.
    - If this modification is used, it is wise to armor far around the back of the shield leg, since the front knee tends to bend in more on low blocks, exposing the back of the thigh to strikes that are not blocked.
- Unlock the knees; don't bend any more than it takes to do so.
- Rotate your hips forward and up, so that your weight moves to the balls of your feet. Keep your shoulders back far enough so that you are not leaning forward. Pay attention to the small of your back. It is easy at that point to tell if you are leaning forwards.
- Keeping your shoulders level and very slightly cock your hip to the forward side.
- Put your shield arm in front of you, extended and pointing to your opponent. Rotate the elbow so that the thumb is pointing down. Move the hand down, then in, then up in a large 'U', ending up with the fingertips about six inches in front of your chin, with your elbow as close to your side as possible.
- Without moving your body, extend your sword arm out to the side at shoulder level, with your palm forward. Move the arm back until it stops. Holding the upper arm still, bend the elbow until your fingertips touch your ear.
  - When holding the sword, it should lay across the back, sword-side of your neck, pointing down, and to your shield side, about 30 to 45 degrees from vertical.
  - Your palm should be oriented nearly forward or slightly down, with the knuckle of your little finger higher than the rest of the hand.
- When fighting an opposite-handed fighter, do not move your feet, but rather rotate your body (clockwise for a right-hander) slightly, with your leading shield edge moving more towards your opponent's weapon.

APPENDIX B - Sword Balance and Construction

When I make a sword:

- I prefer long swords. Mine are about 40 inches from tip to tip.
    - I strongly suggest that smaller and weaker fighters use long, reasonably light, tip-heavy swords. Better technique is required to use them, but the payback is longer reach, more power, and improved handling.
- I prefer basket hilts on swords for the protection they offer, and for the balance they give the weapon.
- I use nylon edging on my swords, since they don't last long at all if I don't. I use two layers, applied as follows:
    - The bottom layer is one-inch tubular nylon webbing, glued to the wood, and taped over with spiral-wrapped strapping tape.
        - I start this layer on the front of the sword about six to twelve inches in front of the hilt. I run it around the point, and down the back edge for nine to twelve inches.
    - The outer layer is two-inch flat nylon webbing, taped over the first layer with spiral-wrapped strapping tape.
        - This layer only covers the last 14 inches of the front edge.
    - This moves the balance of the sword away from the hilt, to my preferred balance 6-9 inches in front of the hilt.
    - It also gives the sword a "front-edge to back-edge" balance, which improves the "liveliness" of the sword. I also prefer swords with a slight back curve, since this enhances this front-to-back balance.
- Having the balance farther forward makes the sword harder to control until you learn how to use it, then it provides you with better rebounds, and greater hitting power.
- Hilt-balanced swords take away from both. Swords with large pommel weights behave strangely, since bounces go towards both weight concentrations; the blade and the hilt.
- I use athletic tape for the top taping. It's lighter than duct tape.
    - Avoid retaping over the old tape. The rounder the sword, the worse it handles. The sword also gets heavier.
- Handles vary tremendously to conform to individual taste.
    - Basically, cut your handles so that they are comfortable for your hand. Unshaped handles are rarely comfortable.
    - Avoid decreasing the front-of-the-blade to the back-of-the-blade dimension. If it is decreased, the blade will tend to break at the hilt.
    - I prefer my handles cut in a triangular cross section, with rounded corners. The topside is 3/4" to 1" wide, and the rounded front edge is 1/4" to 3/8" wide, depending on the size of the rattan. In this way, the backside fits between my thumb and palm, and the rounded front edge fits into the second joint of my fingers.

APPENDIX C - Shield Balance and Construction

When I make a round shield:

- I first cut a two foot square piece of plywood (1/2 inch, 9-ply). I draw a line through two opposing corners, and then inscribe the circle. I then mark two points, each one inch outside of the circle on the diagonal. I then adjust the circle to take in the points, leaving a circle with two slight bulges.
- I then attach a steel edge. The standards from standard and bracket shelving work well. Aluminum can be used if weight is a factor. I attach it at eight to twelve inch intervals with U-shaped brackets made of plumber's tape, bolted through the shield an inch or so inside of the rim.
- I then cover the edging with a section of heater hose, or a bicycle tire, if cost is a concern, which I overlap a few inches, then super-glue and sometimes stitch with wire.
- I set the straps by placing my forearm on the shield so that it follows the diameter with the extra two inches, placing my elbow about two inches from one edge. Since I use punch blocks, this gives me several extra inches on the punching edge without the hindrance to vision and extra weight that a round of that size would have. The back strap will cross my arm an inch or so in front of the bend of the elbow. The other crosses my palm.
- I prefer soft, heavy leather straps, the front being a little loose, and the back with an adjustable buckle, which I also keep a little loose. I use 1/4-inch bolts, with washers and locking nuts. The bolts should be two to four inches in either side of the arm and hand. When I grip the front strap, I always hold as close to the top bolt as possible, so that when my hand tightens, the top of the shield is pulled in towards me, thereby assisting me in holding it at the correct angle. Other people prefer a solid handle in the front. If you do, I suggest you mount it so that it is tilted, with the top end shorter than the bottom end.

APPENDIX D - Breathing Exercise

The following is the breathing exercise that I do. The description will become rather, but I don't know any other way to do it. The object of the exercise, beyond the obvious, is also rather esoteric to me as well. However, it does seem to provide some benefit.

- Sit on your ankles, cross-legged, leaning against a wall, or any comfortable position, as long as your back is very straight.
- Take two deep breaths, raising your arms up and out to sides during each one, to help expand the chest. Exhale by allowing your chest to collapse when your arms come quickly down. Let them fall; don't pull them.
- From now on;
    - Close your eyes.
    - Breathe in through your nose, and out through your mouth and nose. Breathe in by pushing out with your stomach muscles. Breathe out by tightening your stomach muscles. Avoid using expansion of the chest for breathing. It will occur naturally, but try not to do it.
    - If at some point in the exercise you feel as if you are not getting enough air, repeat the two breathes as described at the start of the exercise.
    - Try to imagine the air as visible, perhaps glowing, white, muddy water, or a cloud of sparkles. Visualize it moving in and out of your mouth, down through your body, and to a point about four inches below, and three inches behind your navel. I will refer to this as your 'center point' or 'center'. Others may refer to this as your 'one point', etc.
    - Try to achieve a regular rhythm of breathing in which you consciously control a smooth, even, sufficient flow. It one of the major objectives of this exercise to get this control to become nearly un- or sub-conscious.
    - At some point early in the exercise, after you have been able to regularize the rhythm of your breathing, have the visible flow of air pass through any point or points in your body that hurt. Do them one at a time, for several breathes.
    - At some point later in the exercise, start visualizing all the air in your immediate environment slowly, in time with your breathing, compacting itself on the surface of your body. Once this is accomplished, visualize your entire body slowly compacting, in time with your breathing, into a small ball at your center point. Remain in this state for a short time, trying to experience the solidity and compressed power you now are.
    - Later, start slowly expanding your being from this ball, in time with your breathing. Slowly move it out to the outline of your body. Try not to feel as if this is the final resting place of the expansion. Once this is done, expand your being out farther, stopping briefly at the boundaries of the room, or immediate area, then going on out towards infinity, where you disappear, except for an awareness of self, and your breathing. The breathing should be almost unconscious by now. While you are here, experience your lightness of being, and the vast perceptivity that is now yours. Become nothing, and one with everything.
    - Later, allow a slight focus to evolve in the region of your lower forehead. Visualize the immediate area as a swarm of small sparkles, in which this disembodied focus gently floats. While you are here, experience the peace, relaxation, and harmony that are yours.
    - When you have completed, start slowly bringing back your body and awareness from the infinite. In time with your breathing, bring yourself and limitless energy back to the normal confines of your body.

When you have returned, you have a choice. If you wish to remain low-energy and peaceful when you stop the exercise, open your eyes while feeling the energy existing in your body with a feeling similar to

having just taken a warm, deep drink when you have been cold, and slowly get up. If you wish to remain higher-energy and active, take two deep breathes as you did at the start of the exercise, open your eyes while feeling the energy crackle on and through your body, and get up. In either case, if the exercise is at the end of a formal class, you may wish to perform a bow before rising.

APPENDIX E - Common Problems

While describing the fighting techniques in the body of the manual, it is difficult to fit in a discussion of the common ways in which these techniques are incorrectly applied. The following is an attempt to describe some of the common errors, and the ways in which they may be corrected. Most of them are concerned with a lack of power in blows.

The problems discussed in this appendix are:

#	PROBLEM	PAGE
1	Feet In Line	62
2	Arm Not Cocked	63
3	Using Too Much Arm	64
	Squaring The Shoulders	64
	No Shoulder Rotation	65
4	Stepping With Blows	65
5	Short Returns	66
6	Returning To The Shoulder	67
7	Leaning	67
8	Pushing Back While Swinging	68
9	Pulling Returns Into Body	69
10	Abdomen Not Tensed Properly	71
11	Poor Distance Control	72

1. FEET IN LINE

Figure 19a

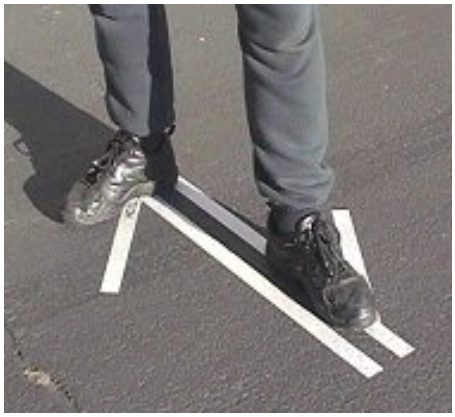
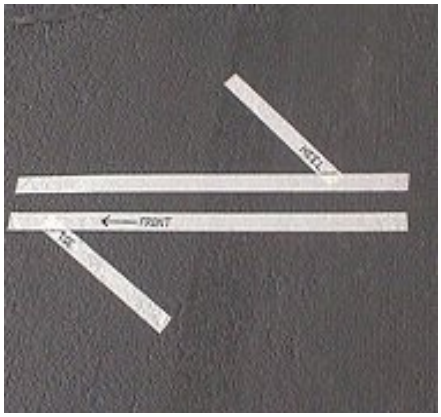


Figure 19b

Figure 19c



This is the most common error, and the one that is most damaging to the weaker fighter. This error occurs when both feet are on the line passing through the fighter towards the opponent. It is made worse when the feet are arranged in a modern fencing stance (Figure 19a) with the forward toe pointing to the opponent, and the back toe at a right angle towards the sword side. The effect of this is to prevent the hips and shoulders from rotating far enough to provide a full force blow towards the target. Unfortunately, this error has been, and continues to be taught as proper technique. This is likely because many men are sufficiently powerful in the upper body that they can strike a "killing" blow despite this error. Since it works for them, they teach others, even those fighters who do not possess enough upper body strength to overcome the error.

The problem caused by this error can be corrected by using the proper stance described in the main body of the manual (Figure 19b). As a reminder, both feet should be about shoulder-width apart, parallel, and pointing about 30 degrees towards the sword side of straight forward (Figure 19c). Retaining this orientation, the back foot should be moved four to six inches towards the sword side. Check this by using a four-inch band (a 2x4 board, or the stripe in a parking lot) as the reference line pointing to your opponent. The toe of the front foot should touch the shield side of this line, and the heel of the back foot should touch the sword side. The back foot can even be one to two inches away from it. There is a proper point for everyone, but do not open your stance too much, since that will start to decrease the delivered power of your blows, even though it might feel better during the early part of the swing. If you completely open your stance, or even reverse your feet, several negative aspects enter the picture, including difficulty with returns, inhibited blocking to the sword side, and lack of support for the shield.

2. ARM NOT COCKED

Figure 20a

Figure 20b

As stated in the body of the manual, in the on-guard position, it is important to have the sword elbow back sufficiently that the muscle in front of the shoulder is fully tightened. If this is not the case, (Figure 20a) there will be a delay in transmission of the power being generated by the body to the arm, because it will be necessary to tighten this muscle before the transmission can occur. In this case, the transmission will only occur when the body has rotated enough that the muscle becomes tight. If the arm is allowed to move as the body rotates, the muscle will never tighten. During this delay, some power will likely be lost.

If the departure from proper form is great enough that the sword hand, and even the sword arm are in front of the shoulder during the on-guard position, a significant amount of power and speed will be lost.

Again, the correction is to train yourself to properly position your sword arm. As a reminder, (Figure 20b) the sword hand should be just above the shoulder, and close enough to the head that you should be able to touch your ear if you extend your index finger. The hand should be palm-forward, or any place from there to palm down. The former hand position provides more variety in initial blows. The latter provides a bit more speed. The sword elbow should be back far enough and held high enough to completely tighten the muscle in the front of the shoulder. It is not a particularly natural position, but can easily be assumed, and reasonably easily held after some training.

3. USING TOO MUCH ARM

This is another very common problem. This occurs when the fighter swings the sword without supplying the main power from the rotation of the body and the drive of the legs. Thus deprived of the majority of its power, the sword does not hit as powerfully as it could. In addition, the focus of the sword strike is turned from a strike to a point, with the uncoiled power of the body behind it, to a swing through a point, with only the arm supplying power. Powerful fighters can get away with this, and therefore tend to teach it as proper technique. This is unfortunate for any of their students who lack the power necessary to deliver a "killing" blow with their arms alone. However, improper technique, especially while moving during the combat, is the more likely villain. The two items below are the most common of these.

Squaring the shoulders

Figure 21a

Figure 21b

This is the situation that occurs if your on-guard position is one in which your chest points directly at your opponent, as in Figure 21a. It is possible, although difficult, to do this even with the feet and hips in the proper position. This eliminates the power provided by the back, chest, and shoulder muscles to the swing. It also eliminates about 45 degrees of arc through which the sword hand and shoulder would move, gathering kinetic energy all the way, if the shoulder were started from the proper position - about 45 degrees (or a bit more) from the line of advance. (Figure 21b)

To correct this, make a point of checking your shoulders when you assume the on-guard position before, or during a pause in a fight. Watch for this in your practice partners.

No shoulder rotation

Figure 22a

Figure 22b

Figure 22c

This is the situation that occurs when you fail to return your shoulder to the proper position between swings. (This does not mean that you must stop there, just that you should pass through the proper point.) This occurs most often during movement, either forward or to the side.

Figures 22a through 22c show a swing from a proper on-guard position, with an improper return, where the sword is not returned far enough.

Figure 22d

If Figure 22d is substituted for Figure 22c, the return is correct.

To correct this, you must develop the disciplined habit of moving your sword shoulder back after most striking techniques. There are two very good methods by which this can be accomplished. The first is to do pell work, preferably with a mirror, and constantly remind yourself (or have an observer do this) to return your shoulder on backswings. The second, and more important, is to practice using the disciplined slow work described in the body of the manual. Once you have learned how to do this type of slow work well enough that you don't need to think about it, you can start paying attention to specific aspects of your technique - like returning your shoulder to the rear during backswings.

4. STEPPING WITH BLOWS

The type of blow described in the body of the manual is a snapping, whipping blow. It is designed to produce a lot of force that is delivered to the target during a very brief contact. This is the type of blow used to break armor. If you step forward (especially if it is with the sword foot) while you are swinging your blow, you will increase the time that the sword is in contact with the target. This spreads the energy being transferred over a longer period of time. This causes the blow to be more of a push, and your opponent will not feel the crisp contact necessary for a "kill". It is correct to step forward just before you initiate the strike, but not during it. If a step with the sword foot must be taken, the step must be taken before the hip starts rotating.

Both pell work and slow work as described in the manual are useful in correcting this. The problem can be subtle, so an observer may be helpful.

5. SHORT RETURNS

Figure 23a

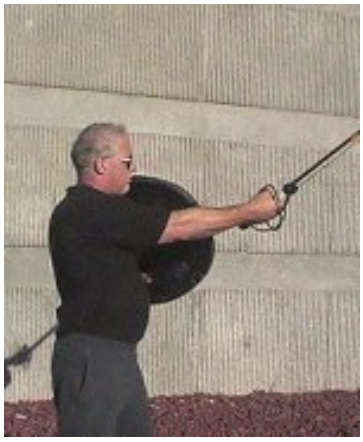


Figure 23b

Figure 23c

Figure 23d

This situation occurs when you are in too much of a hurry to get to the next swing, so you don't move your sword back far enough during your backswing. This does not allow any of your muscles to contribute sufficiently to either the backswing or the subsequent blow. Nor does it allow the sword hand to travel through enough of an arc to pick up much kinetic energy. The result will be blows of diminished power, and very predictable swings, which all come from the same point. The incorrect return is shown in Figures 23a through 23d.

Figure 23e

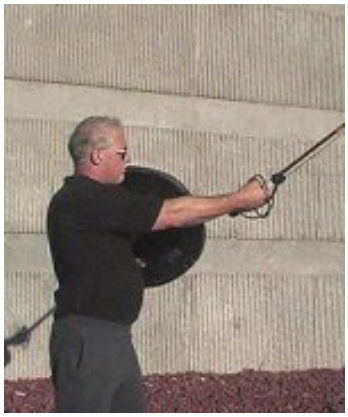


Figure 23f

Figure 23g

Figure 23h

The correct return is shown in Figures 23e through 23h.

To correct this, you must develop the disciplined habit of keeping your sword moving, and not returning to your shoulder, between strikes. There are two very good methods by which this can be accomplished. The first is to do pell work, preferably with a mirror, and constantly remind yourself (or have an observer assist) to move the sword as far to the rear as possible during the backswing. The second, and more important, is to practice using the disciplined slow work described in the body of the manual. Once you have learned how to do this type of slow work well enough that you don't need to think about it, you can start paying attention to specific aspects of your technique - like moving the sword as far to the rear as possible during the backswing.

Note that all circular motions (like a sword swing) contract towards the center of rotation as the motion speeds up. Therefore, the motions used in slow practice should be moved further out from the center of rotation than they would be for a normal-speed motion. This can be observed particularly in Figure 23g,

where the backward movement of the sword is greater than it would be if performed at full speed. If the slow practice movement is practiced in this manner, the full speed blow will move through an optimum path. If the slow practice movement is abbreviated as in Figure 23c, the resulting full speed motion will be unacceptably short.

6. RETURNING TO THE SHOULDER

This is the situation in which you return your sword to your shoulder, as in the on-guard position, briefly between your swings. There is no necessity for doing this, and it both decreases the frequency of your swings, and it will likely reduce their power. The reason for the former is obvious. If you stop, however briefly, during your backswing, your next swing will not arrive as soon as it would have.

The reduction in power will likely occur because you will probably not have returned your body to the proper on-guard position, with the hips and arm properly positioned, when you stop your sword. Therefore, you will not be fully set to initiate the next blow.

In summary, stopping loses the power that might have been carried over from the backswing, and encourages you to not have your arm and hips fully cocked for the next blow.

Both pell work and slow work as described in the manual are useful in correcting this. Ask your training partners to point this out to you.

7. LEANING

The concept of "commitment" was discussed in the body of the article. In this context, commitment refers to a disposition towards a particular movement or direction of movement. Such commitment should be avoided because it can be used as a cue by your opponent to determine what and when you are going to do next, or to determine that you are out of position to counter a specific attack.

In addition, leaning in any direction has the unfortunate effect of committing you to movement in that direction. It does not mean that you have to complete the movement, but it does mean that you have committed to it. However, if you do not actually make the movement, you are forced to expend extra time and energy to return from that commitment (the direction of the lean) to a neutral point, before moving in another, desired direction.

In most cases, anything that forces a commitment of this sort is to be avoided. There are plenty of fighters who can take advantage of these unintentional commitments to hit you one way when you are committed to another.

There are special circumstances in which some sort of lean provides an advantage. This advantage, however, likely does not apply to most situations. If you are going to lean to gain an advantage, be sure that the situation is correct for you to achieve something with it.

Also remember that there is no such thing as a free lunch. For every advantage, there is a price. When you lean, you pay the price described below. If you gain no corresponding advantage, you are paying too much.

Leaning inhibits the rotation of the body, so it can negatively affect power generation, and blocking range, reach, and speed. In addition, leaning limits the options for throwing blows.

Both pell work and slow work as described in the manual are useful in correcting this. Ask your training partners to point this out to you.

8. PUSHING BACK WHILE SWINGING

Figures 24a through 24c show a swing with the problem occurring. Note that during the swing, the knee moves back from its original position, pushing the body back as well.

Figure 24a

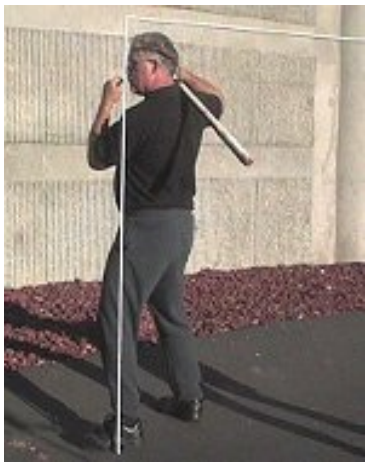


Figure 24b

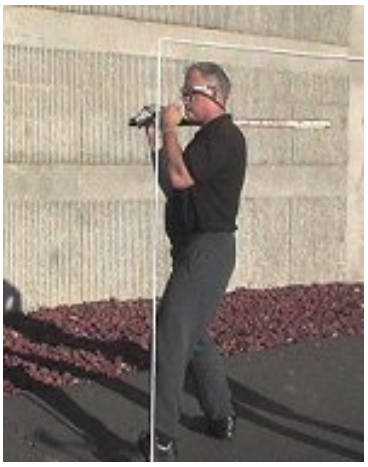


Figure 24c

This is another very common problem that significantly reduces the power of blows, and interferes with the backswing. It is caused by pushing back with the front leg while swinging a blow. In severe cases, the leg actually straightens, but usually the leg remains bent. In either case, the hips are pushed back as the sword moves forward. The power of the blow is reduced because it loses the drive of the back leg, and is deprived of the impetus provided by weight of the body moving forward and slightly down. The backswing is greatly inhibited because the front leg is what drives the backswing. The backswing is executed in a manner that is similar to throwing a left-handed blow towards your sword-side rear. The front leg must drive the hips around towards the sword side and back. If the front leg is straight, or has pushed back to the shield side, it is very difficult to get any drive from it to support the backswing.

Figure 24d

Figure 24e

Figure 24f

This problem often contributes to Problem Nine - Pulling Returns Into The Body.

Figures 24d through 24f show the correct swing with the knee remaining bent, and some weight being shifted forward. Note that the center of balance does not move forward when the weight is shifted, although the shoulder and hip rotation in Figure 24f do move that side of the body forward. Everything balances. The sword shoulder, sword hip, and shield knee move forward. The shield shoulder moves back, and serves as a counter-balance.

Again, the correction can be achieved with pell and slow work. Pell work can be especially productive if you can do it with a mirror. The mirror should be placed so that you can look sideways into it. When it is in that position, the mirror can more easily show whether or not you are pushing back.

9. PULLING RETURNS INTO BODY

Figure 25a

Figure 25b

Figure 25c

Figure 25d

Figure 25e

Figures 25a through 25e demonstrate a side-return with the problem occurring. Note in Figure 25b that the sword is being pulled back too close to the body. In Figure 25c, this continues, resulting in the hand moving between the elbow and the body. The sword is now trapped. The only recourse is to whip the sword around horizontally, causing the blade to move behind the body towards the shield side. Figure 25f shows Figure 25c from the front.

Figure 25f

This is a subtle, but very serious problem. While performing a backswing, it is important for several reasons to keep the handle of the sword moving back towards a point outside of the elbow. If, instead, the handle moves back, but towards the body, the elbow is forced to move out. This has the effect of "trapping" the sword between the arm and the body.

Once this happens, the only ways to free the sword are to either move it forward then to the outside, or whipping the sword out and back. Moving the sword forward to free it is difficult, since this problem most often occurs when your opponent is advancing, and there is little time available to "reset" your backswing.

The second method of freeing the sword, that of whipping the sword out and back, requires considerable forearm and wrist strength, and moves the sword into a horizontal path. This, in turn, causes the sword to move horizontally across the back towards the shield side, causing considerable wasted motion and time, and limiting the options for the next blow. Generally, once you have trapped your sword, you can free it only by moving away from your opponent, having had to block several of his or her blows without response.

The problem is generally caused by two technique flaws acting together. The first of these is leaning forward. Strong hip and shoulder rotation are necessary for the side return, which requires the sword to

move down, out, and back. The leaning interferes with this by inhibiting the rotation of the body. The second of these is Problem Eight - Pushing Back While Swinging. In addition to reducing the power of blows, this technique problem (number eight) also interferes with the backswing. When the front leg pushes back, the hips are forced back, usually causing the shoulders to lean forward. This not only interferes with rotation, it stops it cold. Then, when the sword arm tries to move back, the path of least resistance is towards the body.

Another contributing factor is Problem Eleven - Poor Range Control. Specifically, if you get too close to your opponent, such that your shield is pushed back into you, your legs may move slightly ahead of your body, causing a slight lean to the rear. The backward lean is often avoided by leaning forward. In either case, you are leaning, (or perhaps also pushing, which is an even greater commitment) and the rotation of your hips and shoulders is inhibited. You are then back to the start of the previous paragraph.

It is difficult to correct this problem. The best method is pell work, with attention being paid to the knees and to weight shift during techniques. The knees should bend and unbend during techniques, but they should never straighten. During swings, the weight should shift slightly towards the front knee as it bends and moves slightly towards the shield side. On the backswings, the weight should shift slightly towards the back knee, causing it to bend and move slightly towards the sword side. The movements of the knee should be timed to accentuate the motion of the hips. Continue to pay attention to the knees and the weight shift during slow work.

Another method of practice that can help in correcting this problem is to watch your sword during the entire course of the backswing. (It's useful, but not necessary, to use a mirror.) Swords will move any way that you want, if you move them slow enough, and you watch them. If you have a mirror available, watch your reflection from the front and from the sword side. The different views will allow you to see, and correct, different aspects of the sword's motion. In addition, practice the proper side return technique, especially using the exercise described in the body of the manual.

Figure 25g

Figure 25h

Figure 25i

Figure 25j

Figure 25k

Figures 25g through 25k show a correct side return. Note in Figure 25h that while the sword is being pulled down, it is also being pulled slightly out from the body. In Figure 25j, the hand and the entire sword are outside of the elbow.

Figure 25l is a front view of Figure 25i.

Figure 25l

10. ABDOMEN NOT TENSED PROPERLY

This is actually a problem in the timing of force application during a swing. It usually afflicts fighters who have a Karate background, or who have a very flexible waist. The situation occurs when the hips are rotated too quickly during a swing, without allowing time to transmit the drive force from the legs. This reduces the power of the blow being struck. The reason that it affects ex-Karate players is that in Karate the weapon being moved is the hand, which weighs much less than the sword. In that case, a more powerful whip is produced by a faster hip rotation that pulls the hand after it. With the much heavier swords, the hip rotation needs to be much slower, so that the drive from the leg and the rotating body can act on the sword throughout the first half or two-thirds of the swing. Similarly, those with a very flexible waist tend to rotate the hips quickly without the slower tensing of the abdominal muscles required for proper timing.

Figure 26a

Figure 26b

Figure 26c

Figures 26a through 26c demonstrate the problem. Note in Figure 26b that the lower end of the tape lines on my abdomen have already moved around to my left, while the upper ends of the lines, and the sword shoulder, have not yet moved. Contrast this with Figures 26d through 26f, below, where the ends of the lines move nearly simultaneously, just very slightly in front of the sword shoulder. In many cases, the problem is worse than is shown by the figures. I am not especially flexible around the waist, so I could not demonstrate the problem well.

Figure 26d

Figure 26e

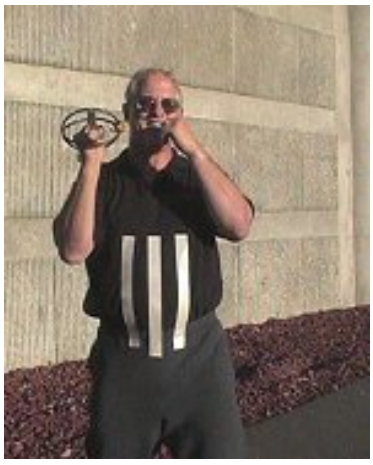


Figure 26f

The "butterfly walk" and the return exercise are useful in correcting this problem. Practice in slow motion, so that you have time to notice what you are doing, and to correct it if necessary. The proper

technique is to start tensing the stomach muscles as the hip rotation starts. Both the tensing and the rotation must be gradual, reaching completion just as the sword hand leaves the shoulder. The hand, of course, is the last thing that moves during the swing.

11. POOR DISTANCE CONTROL

All things being equal, the best distance at which to fight is the distance that allows you to perform your techniques easily. However, things are rarely equal. My strategy has always been to fight at the distance where my techniques were more effective than my opponent's. My techniques are best and most extensive at normal sword range. However, if my opponent also likes that range, I may move outside or inside, depending on which range best suits me, and least suits my opponent.

For instance, if my opponent has a super-speed snap, the last thing I want to do is to fight from outside, where my lack of speed puts me at a disadvantage.

If my opponent is taller and heavier than I am, fighting at close range is likely not a good option. For instance, I once had the experience of fighting Duke Uther with bastard swords. My normal technique with that weapon is to fight very close. My inside techniques are very good, and I am usually at least as powerful as my opponent. This was probably true in this case, but, his Grace is five inches taller, and at the time was several dozen pounds heavier than I. I found myself in the position I preferred, but with his Grace's forearms on top of mine. This made it difficult to perform my techniques. After backing up about one foot, things started working again.

Generally, the better fighters have good outside and inside techniques, as well as those for the middle distance. Unless you know that your opponent has a weakness at a specific range, take the one that works best for you.

One thing that may be of use is a technique of safely crossing over the "in range" line. I have found that the technique that works best for me is to lead with my sword, while swinging at my opponent's weapon. This has two advantages. The sword crosses the line first, and my swing interferes with my opponent's weapon. Leading with one's head is what I call the "Rocky Balboa" style. Leading with your shield is not as bad, but it does commit your shield to a horizontal, forward motion. This is not useful for blocking blows to the head or leg.

The trick is not to step before you swing, but to let the swing pull your back foot into a step as your sword moves away from you towards your opponent. This will lessen the effectiveness of the swing, but it will get you in range, with your weapon moving, safely. I usually follow up this swing by quickly moving my shield towards my opponent's weapon.

The preceding paragraphs are tactics. The problem that I wish to discuss here are those caused by getting in too close.

If you move quickly to the inner range, and get so close that your shield is pushed into you, several things can happen, all of them bad.

- It will cause your shoulders to square up. See Problem Three - Using Too Much Arm.
- Your legs will have a tendency to continue forward, even though the counter-pressure on the shield has stopped your upper body. This will effectively cause you to lean back. See Problem 7 - Leaning. You can counteract this by leaning forward, but that's the same problem, with a different direction.

  The leaning can, in turn, contribute to Problem Five - Short Return, Problem Eight - Pushing Back While Swinging, and Problem Nine - Pulling Returns Into Body.
- You may find yourself in too close to use even your "inside" techniques properly (assuming you have some good ones). If your opponent has a height or weight advantage, this can be unfortunate for you.
- You will likely have over-committed to a forward direction. If your opponent knows how to use this, you will be at a disadvantage.

- Your shield will likely be face-to-face with your opponent's shield. All things being equal, you will each have an even chance of controlling the other's shield. 50-50 is not very good odds.

APPENDIX F - Especially for Women

There are certain techniques, which have been described in Appendix E, to which women fighters, and any other fighter having power problems, should pay particular attention. These are also techniques that can sometimes be modified slightly to provide more power. Others are often performed incorrectly. In some cases, I will mention a specific aspect of a technique that is of particular importance.

Problems 1, 2, 3, 8, and 10 described in Appendix E are the ones that are most likely to reduce the power of blows. Problem 11 is a problem that leads into many of these.

- **Problem 1** (feet in line) is the main issue for most women. If this one isn't fixed, nothing else matters. Unless the stance is corrected, the corrections of the other problems will not be sufficient to improve power enough to strike a "killing" blow.

  The correction mentioned in Appendix E works because moving the back foot towards the sword side allows free movement of the hips. The correction also relies on keeping the sword foot back, to provide more power by driving forward during the swing.

  The practice of fighting with the sword foot forward is an improvement over the modern fencing stance, in that it does allow hip movement. However, it is an over-correction. The problem with this practice is that it essentially starts the swing half way through, thereby losing the drive of the back leg, and much of the power that would be generated by the full rotation of the hips. I do not recommend this.

- **Problem 2** (arm not cocked) is the result of three things.
  - The most usual reason is improper training. Often the trainers will suggest an arm position with the elbow down. The reason given is that it is a better defensive position. I disagree.

    With the arm cocked back, the hand is in relatively the same position as with the elbow down. Also, the elbow is back, and out of range of your opponent unless you also commit the error of squaring your shoulders.

    Holding the sword forward and over the head may provide a better static defense. Unfortunately, it does so at the expense of inhibiting an active sword defense by slowing down the movements of the sword, especially if the elbow is held forward of the shoulder. It also forces the fighter to rely heavily on reaction speed. This is a losing game, if you are not very quick.

    Also, even if having the elbow down and/or the sword forward and up provides a better defensive position, it will pretty much eliminate your offense. If you don't have an effective offense (and with your blows lacking power and your sword committed to defense, you don't,), you are likely to lose eventually, anyway.
  - The second is lack of technique practice. Few fighters in the SCA actually realize that you need to practice techniques as well as just bashing. Unfortunately, the less powerful fighters are usually the ones paying the price.

    This could also be extended to include lack of physical preparation. There is no sport or martial art where muscle toning and endurance training is not considered useful. The SCA has a considerable romantic element, and many people think that they become a hero as soon as they pick up a sword. However, in the real world (SCA included), having poorly-toned muscles, being out of condition and overweight will not help your fighting.
  - The third reason is often armor. Many women feel that they need a lot of steel to protect them. Often this results in heavy shoulder armor that keeps them from easily having their arms in the proper on-guard position. I would suggest that plastic and padding will work at least as well, be lighter, and allow more flexibility and mobility. If you're really into authenticity, use lighter

stainless steel or boiled leather, with horsehair padding. In any case, avoid shoulder armor that restricts arm movement.

- **Problems 3** (using too much arm) **and 8** (pushing back while swinging) are common to all fighters, but if you have power problems, these will make them very much worse. If you have either problem, especially number 8, and manage to correct it, you will notice an increase in power. Performed properly, the technique of moving your shield knee slightly forward adds the falling weight of your body to the twisting power of the hips to provide increased power for the sword. Again, technique practice and slow work are the keys. You are never going to be big-and-strong-and-fast. Being very good is a fine substitute.
- **Problem 4** (stepping with swings) is a real temptation for smaller fighters who have the problem of closing the distance to their opponent. It does get you in close, but it takes power away from the blow being thrown, and, since it is usually hurried, it tends to move the smaller fighter in too close. The proper range for most fighters is the one at which their sword easily reaches their opponent. If you get in much closer, the larger, stronger fighter can "power in" short blows, or use wraps, while you will be in too close to use your techniques properly.

  The method by which I close distance is to have my sword be the first thing over the "maximum range" line. I use a technique that looks like a swing towards my opponent's head, but is in reality a moving block, with the sword tip fairly high, moving towards their sword. As it moves past my head, I allow my back foot to be pulled forward into a step. Note that I said that the sword should move past my head before the back foot is pulled forward. If you don't do this, then your head will likely be the part of you that crosses the line first. I refer to this latter, unfortunate practice as the "Rocky Balboa" style (leading with your head).

  This whole method is actually a moving, nearly vertical sword block, not a "killing" swing. As the sword pulls the back foot into a step, power is taken away from the swing, and it will feel strange. This is acceptable; since the object is to close the range, not swing a killing blow. After the step, I will replace my sword, which should have impacted on my opponent's sword, or on the sword-edge corner of their shield, with my shield. At the same time, I move my shield foot up, and adjust my stance and distance.

- **Problem 9 (pulling returns into body) leads to loss of power and coordination, and makes combinations all but impossible.**

  This is a real killer, both literally and figuratively. If you don't make a conscientious effort to fix this, you will lose a lot of fights with your sword trapped close to your body, while your opponent pounds on you. The sword has to swing away from you, to give it freedom to move, and to allow it to gather kinetic energy. On the foreswing, it comes back in close for acceleration and guidance, but not on the backswing.

  As an exercise, hold your sword from the wrong end with both hands. Swing it around in combinations. Alternatively, do pell work with both hands using a two-handed maul. Pay attention to the fact that you lean away from the weapon as you swing it. Pay attention to how it feels. This is the same way it works with single-handed swords.

- **Problem 10** (abdomen not tensed properly) seems to be endemic, but not exclusive, to women fighters. One of my more accomplished students, a male knight, had to be trained out of this one. It's difficult to work with this, because the wrong way is the easy way. The best results require that you practice in such a manner that you can pay attention to the problem. This means slow practice. You should have time both to notice and correct the problem during your exercises. It also means repetition. It's not as exciting as bashing, but it gets results.
- **Problem 11** (poor distance control) is one that can be avoided with a bit of practice. Unfortunately, many women are encouraged to be very aggressive, to close the range quickly and get inside. I'm not sure why this happens, but it is not good advice. The aggression is fine. It serves no purpose to tiptoe

around out of range when you are fighting a better, faster fighter. Your opponent will be able to close with you very quickly, and at a time that is of their choosing. It is better to take the initiative, and get to your desired range as quickly as possible.

However, neither does it help to get inside quickly, if you end up too close. I have seen to many small fighters charge quickly into very short range, where they cannot properly swing their sword, cannot move their shield because it is jammed up against their opponents, cannot do a proper return because the pressure on their shield causes them to lean back (or too far forward), and leaves them completely open for wraps, if their opponent has a height or power advantage.

I urge you to read the discussion in problem four.

The **other problems** listed in Appendix E also deserve the attention of women fighters. All of them can cause trouble by reducing power and mobility.

Sword Weight & Balance

Often, women are recommended to use swords that are, essentially, short, heavy clubs. The reasons given usually are something like:

- Short swords should be used because they are easier to handle.

  Unfortunately, although short swords are easier to handle, they also do not hit with power unless you have big, strong arms, and swing very hard. This choice is usually impractical for women.

- Heavy swords should be used to supply hitting power.

  Heavy swords hit with more power, assuming that the fighter can swing them with enough speed and accuracy to get past shields. This is harder to do with a heavy sword, if you do not have good upper-body strength.

I would recommend that the sword should be long, reasonably light, and balanced as far forward on the blade as possible. I use 40-inch swords (one inch is behind the hilt). This may be too long for many women, but I wouldn't use anything under 36 inches long. Also, it would be preferable if the sword has a front-edge-to-back-edge balance as will as the tip to-pommel balance

This is a blade for a technician. It is more difficult to learn, but the top end of its performance is much higher than that of a short, heavy club.

I usually accomplish the balancing by:

- Adding a one-inch, tubular nylon strap, which I glue on, then tape over, to the last half or third of the front edge of the sword, running it over the tip, and down the back edge for about eight inches.
- Over that, I tape two inch flat webbing on the front edge, over the last one foot of the front edge of the sword.
- I also add four to six inches of heavy leather, one inch wide, on the back edge, behind the point.

The lengths of these materials can vary, depending on how much weight you can handle. I use longer pieces, to add more weight. You might want to use shorter lengths.

Of the following techniques the snap and side return, as described below, are modifications of the standard techniques. Women, or other fighters with power problems must be careful to use the modified technique instead of the standard technique.

The whip around the corner is actually the proper way to throw a blow after making an overhead return. However, it is often done incorrectly, with a corresponding loss of power to the blow being thrown.

- **Snap**

  This must be modified such that the elbow remains out from the body during the swing. When the elbow remains further out, the weight of the elbow traveling through a longer arc gathers more kinetic energy during the swing. This is transmitted to the sword. The increased rotational momentum of the elbow also accentuates the "twisting" power by leading the hips into the proper motion.

- **Side Return**

  The analogy that I use for the side return is that of a giant teardrop, lying on its side, with the small end forward. During the side return and the following swing, the sword hand follows the shape of the teardrop.

  Unfortunately, moving the sword through the upper half of the rounded end of the teardrop requires more strength than some fighters can manage. The best way that I have found to remedy this is to modify the teardrop shape so that the top is made into a straight, horizontal line that passes over the sword shoulder. The rounded end must also be modified so that the curve moves smoothly in to this straight line as it goes forward.

Figure 27a

Figure 27b

Figure 27c

Figure 27d

Figure 27e

Figures 27a through 27e demonstrate the modified side return, which can be called the "half teardrop". Figure 27f provides a front view of the motion just after Figure 27d.

Figure 27f

As the sword starts moving forward;

1. The sword arm must be quickly bent, and the elbow must lead the movement forward. The sword hand should trail slightly behind the elbow.
2. The sword hand must be curled up towards the top of the sword shoulder, passing without pausing through the point of the shoulder where the sword would be at rest in an on-guard position, but not stopping.
3. As the sword moves forward over the shoulder, it must be horizontal, and the tip must be pointing straight back. Until it starts to swing around, the entire sword should follow along the same horizontal path. It is important to move the sword precisely on this path. Deviation will lead to loss of power, and a restriction of the possible targets.

   If the sword tip is not at the same level as the sword hand, so that the entire sword does not follow the horizontal line, it will be necessary to expend extra energy and time to pull it over

your shoulder. Since you are then pulling it over and down, your choice of targets is restricted to those close to the vertical.

If you allow the sword tip to move in back of your head to your shield side, it will be necessary to expend extra energy and time to pull it around your head. Since you are pulling it around sideways, your choice of targets is restricted to those close to the horizontal.

4. As the sword passes over the shoulder, the shield shoulder must be moved quickly back. This allows the sword to remain in its horizontal path for a few inches longer.
5. The sword hand should be able to move about ten to twelve inches in front of the shoulder before the sword starts to swing around.
6. As the sword starts to swing around, pull the sword hand slightly towards the shield side, then allow it to move back towards the sword side as the swing completes.

It is possible to swing blows to the offside with this technique. Just as the hand starts moving forward along the horizontal line (at the end of step 2), start pushing forward with your thumb. As the sword hand passes over the shoulder (step 4), turn your head slightly to the shield side. The sword hand passes in front of your head.

- **Whip around the corner (from overhead return)**

From the overhead return, it is important that the next blow not be started by moving your sword hand immediately forward. If you do this, the sword will simply change ends, without much power at all. Your sword hand should move slightly back as your hips start to move forward, then forward towards the target. The sword will start to follow the hand back, then "whip" around the corner to move forward. This adds a lot of power to the blow.

Figure 28a

Figure 28b

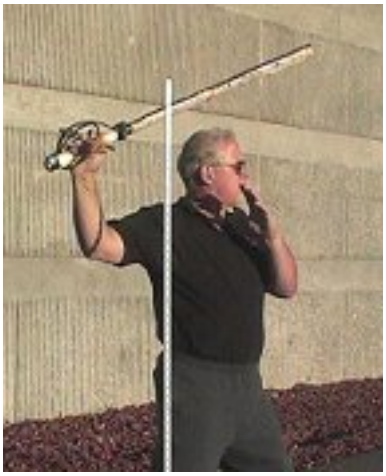


Figure 28c

Note in Figures 28a through 28c, the hand moves slightly back as the hip starts to twist forward.

In addition to technical issues, there can be problems with attitude or with your approach to the game. It may not be politically correct to say so, but relying on speed, strength, agility, quickness, or aggression is a losing game. Those are not, and will not be your strong points.

The way to win against more powerful and faster fighters is to be more perceptive and better technician than they are. Learn to "read" the fight and your opponents so well that you are moving to block or strike while they are still making up their mind to execute the technique to which they are already committed. Be able to perform your techniques flawlessly so that you can take advantage of the openings, and hit them hard enough to "kill".

If you believe that this is not the case, and that you can match up to anybody with your speed and power, or if you are not interested in technique, and want to be a "stick jock" or "just one of the boys", then I suggest that you are wasting your time with this manual.

The keys to learning these things are technique practice and slow work. Train smart, and fight smart. Look at any technique that somebody recommends to you. Apply some common sense, in light of what you have learned here. Does it allow you to swing with power and speed? Does it force you to match reactions with somebody stronger and faster? Will it only work on unskilled opponents? Does it inhibit the next technique?

In conclusion, remember to learn slow and polish fast. As I have said many times before, slow work is extremely important in the learning process. Moving fast feels better, but you can't tell if you are performing the technique correctly, or simply glossing over your mistakes. You must train slowly enough that you have time to notice what you are doing. It's necessary to eventually make the transition to fast speed, but you don't do this until you can do the technique correctly.

APPENDIX G - Two Swords (Florentine)

Nearly all of the techniques used in this style are the same as, or adaptations of, the basic techniques used in sword and shield. For this reason, the basic techniques of striking and returning the blade will not be covered in this appendix. The main exception is the cross-blocking technique.

Stance

For the purposes of illustration, start with a vertical line. This line represents the direction of advance towards your opponent. Cross this with a horizontal line. Stand facing your opponent, with the vertical line between your feet. Have your feet parallel with one another at about shoulder width, and your heels touching the horizontal line. Assuming that you are right-handed, move the right foot directly back until the toe crosses the line by about an inch. With your weight on the balls of your feet, rotate the heels towards the left until your feet are about 30 degrees from straight forward. This is the basic position for the feet. When you are out of range, and still maneuvering, your feet may be closer together. When you are in closer, and swinging, your feet should be farther apart.

The pelvis should be rotated forward, the back should be upright, and the shoulders should be back. Bend the knees slightly, and have your weight mainly on the balls of your feet.

When positioning the arms, start with your elbows touching the sides of your body. Move the hands up and forward until the forearms are tilted slightly up from horizontal, with the heel of the hand about six to eight inches higher than the elbow. Move each hand directly outwards until they are about six inches outside of the elbow. At this time, allow the elbows to move about four inches away from the sides of your body. This should have the effect of tightening the muscles on the insides of your forearms, and on the front of your shoulders.

Avoid leaning forwards. If you have to lean, and you will, try to lean towards the side as much as possible. As a test, pay attention to the small of your back, right above the belt line. Lean forwards. Note the sensation, and avoid it while practicing the technique.

Try to keep the swords parallel and vertical. In the basic on-guard stance, the tips should be six to ten inches in back of the hand, so that the swords are not quite vertical.

Strikes

The preferred return is an adaptation of the overhead return from sword and shield. The side return can be used, but is slower. The decision as to which one should be used will become clear from practice.

From the on-guard position, the body moves as if you are fighting two opponents who are facing you, but who are respectively about 60 degree to one side or the other of straight forwards. When striking with your right hand, you move your body as if you are striking towards the opponent to your left, When striking with your left hand, you move your body as if you are striking towards the opponent on your right. This allows you to drive your left sword with your front leg, since you are aiming your lower body toward the opponent at 60 degrees from front.

The sword hand

- The blows are initiated with a strong push of the sword leg,
- This is followed quickly and smoothly by a strong push and rotation of the sword hip towards the target.
- The sword elbow immediately follows, causing the sword tip to rotate towards the rear, while causing the sword hand to move slightly back, then continue its motion by whipping forward towards the target.

- As the hand moves forward, visualize pointing the index finger at the target. Since the actual target is directly in front of you, move the sword hand towards it, instead of towards the imaginary opponent described above.

The other hand

- While the sword moves towards the target, the left hand should be moving back and up, so that the elbow ends its backward motion at about shoulder level, and far enough in back of you that the shoulder is fully "cocked" for the next blow.
- The hand should be nearly directly above the elbow, with the forearm vertical.
- The sword should be pointing forward, about 30 degrees from vertical.
- The following blow with the left hand is performed as the initial blow with the right, except for the starting position. As the left sword moves forward, the right hand performs a similar movement back and up to cock the right shoulder.

During all phases of the motions:

- The body should remain upright, with the shoulders leaning slightly back from your chest. Each shoulder does move forward or back with the movement of its sword.
- Your weight should move towards the front knee with each blow, timed just after the hip movement to help pull the sword forward.
- During the motions, both knees move somewhat to the sides; to the left with a right-handed swing, and to the right with a left-handed swing.
- Never straighten your knees, or push yourself backwards while striking or blocking.

Blocks

The preferred block is the cross-block. While using this technique, you block blows coming at your left side with your right sword, and vice-versa. This provides the capability of a lower block than can easily be performed with a same-side block. In addition, it cocks your other blade that is on the side from which your opponent attacked, allowing you to attack as his sword retreats.

Blocks start out as strikes, as far as the legs and hip are concerned. From there, it is the hand that is pushed forward, followed by the elbow, instead of the reverse that occurs during strikes. The hand moves forward with the blade vertical, as if you were trying to punch your opponent in the torso. Your own body moves as if you had rotated towards the point of the block, and started to kneel down. You don't actually kneel, but you can come very close on low blocks.

Try to cross your opponent's sword at as close to a right angle as possible. The preferred point on your own sword with which to block is about six inches above the hand. These blocks are very powerful, and can knock your opponent's sword from his hand.

It is possible to turn a strike into a block, when necessary, by slowing the forward motion of the hand, and allowing the blade to move to the vertical.

Timing and Distance

When performed correctly, the cross-blocking technique allows you to throw blows at about 2/3 time. In other words, you can throw about three blows for your opponent's two. However, an opponent using a sword and shield can throw a faster single blow, since he or she will have more drive with his or her sword leg and shoulder.

Reach is normally about even. The opponents with a sword and shield will be able to more effectively lean forward to extend their range, since they will have a shield to protect their over-commitment. However, any movement towards the opponent's corners provides the Florentine fighter better reach, since his or her sword shoulders are farther forward.

APPENDIX H - Single-Hip Returns and Attacks

This is a family of techniques, which contains several of what I call ”world class” techniques. The obvious characteristic of these techniques is that they produce a powerful second strike which follows very quickly after the first, and which often comes in at an unexpected angle. They include techniques that are best used when the opponents fight with opposite hands, as well as techniques most effective against opponents fighting with the same hand as the attacker. This is noted in the descriptions of the variations. In any case, they are singularly effective, and very difficult to defend against, if properly executed.

Basically, the movement follows a forehand strike. The sword is then pulled back, and around for a strike to the opposite side of your opponent. The hips, instead of coming forward to impel the blade, continue to turn in a clockwise direction, in a motion similar to the start of a Judo roll.

While the initial motion of the sword is similar to my side return technique, (except for the third variant) the subsequent forward movement of the sword takes advantage of the principle of “reduced radius of rotation“, wherein the speed of the blade is increased by reducing the distance between the center point of the circle around which the blade is traveling, and the balance point of the blade. The power of the technique is enhanced by the fact that the radius of rotation is reduced twice, during the technique.

There are three main variants of this blow. The variations are in the angles of the attack, which are, respectively, horizontal, slanted down at about 45 degrees, and vertical, with the tip down. The important point to remember is that the angle of attack of these techniques is determined by the angle of the return of the blade, which defines the plane in which the attack will occur. This plane can be moved, but the blade’s path must remain in the plane.

Figure 29a

Figure 29b

Figure 29c

Figure 29d

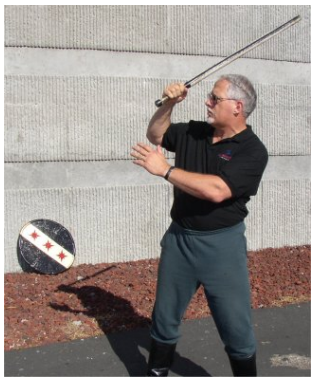


Figure 29e

Figures 29a through 29e illustrate the basic movements involved (in this case, for variation 2).

- Note in the transition between figure 29a to figure 29b that the blade is pulled back similarly to the movement involved in a normal side return. In this case, there is more upward movement to the blade, to define the plane of the attack (in this case, about 45 degrees).
- Besides this upward movement, the critical difference from a side return is that the blade is allowed to roll around towards the back of your head, as can be seen in figure 29c. In this figure, the blade is being ”curled” towards your forehead.
- In figure 29d, the sword hand has reached the point where it is as close as it will come to your head, and as high as it will reach. At this point, the hand must be stopped to change the center of rotation of the blade from the middle of your body to your sword hand.
- Stopping your hand is accomplished by allowing your sword elbow to rise up – essentially following the blade through a small part of the remaining portion of the swing plane. When this happens, the sword speeds up, and continues its path, along the swing plane, to the target. The sword hand should not move forward from the position where it was stopped.

Note that the hand does not rise over the head – it stays below the top of the head and, since your body rotates during this technique, it stays generally in front of your face. If you unlock your shoulder to move your blade over your head, you will lose power. More detailed directions for movement can be found below, in the descriptions of the major variations of this technique.

Variation 1a – Horizontal Pass

Description

This variation is most useful when used against an opponent who fights with the opposite hand from you. It consists of a combination of two blows, the second of which arrives quickly after the first, and from a very different angle. It does involve what could be called a passing attack on your opponent’s shield side, targeting the back of the side of your opponent’s helm. This variation uses a horizontal plane for the transition between the two blows. The plane rises during the transition.

While I cannot say for certain that he developed this variation, I first noticed it being used to great effect by Duke James Greyhelm, of the West.

Stance

I prefer to use these techniques from my standard stance, but I believe it could be used with a stance that had the sword-foot forward. The techniques are more effective if the shield foot ends up being forward when the actual blow is struck. I think that a slide-step (from a traditional stance) is quicker and less noticeable than the full stride that would be required from the sword-foot-forward stance. However, the tactical situation might well overweigh the optimal efficiency.

Setup

The offside blows that result from this technique are very short-ranged, so it is necessary to use the shield pass to obtain the proper distance. Since the second blow is to the head, it is best set up by a low first blow to your sword side of your opponent. This will cause a commitment, and possible some movement, down and away from the target of the second blow.

The difficult part of the setup is that you must end up with your weight on your back foot, once the setup blow is struck. This is necessary to allow you to spring forward with your shield foot towards the target. Given this, it can be useful to execute the setup blow as a feint that actually strikes, rather than a full-force blow requiring a weight shift to the front foot.

Timing

This variation of the technique is best used from a medium-long range, when not actively engaged.

Execution

This variation of the technique is one, which requires you to totally commit to the motion. Essentially, you will take a very long, gliding step towards your opponent, with your body moving as if you were planning to do a Judo roll past him, on his shield side (remember that your opponent is fighting with the opposite hand). The blow actually lands while you are in the midst of this roll. The impact of the sword, and the probable impact of your shield on your opponent's shield, will cause a slight pause in the rolling motion, allowing you to catch your balance with your right foot, which will have slid up close to your left foot, then moved behind and past, to be in position to catch you.

1 Throw a forehand blow to the leg of your opponent on your forehand side.

- **a** Move your weight a little more towards your sword foot than usual, and bend that leg slightly, to "load" it to push you forward into a longer step with your shield foot.

2 Start the side return.

- **a** As your blade moves back, take a long, gliding step with your shield foot towards a point just outside of your opponent's shield shoulder (remembering that you are fighting an opposite-handed opponent).
- **b** The blade should be thrown wide, to the sword side, about 30 to 45 degrees from straight back.
- **c** Your abdominal muscles should be tight during the entire technique. In fact, your whole body, above the hips, should be nearly rigid, except for the necessary movement of the arms.

3 When the blade reaches the furthest back point, which should be about 30 degrees towards your sword side of being straight back:

- **a** Lean towards your shield shoulder, while rotating slightly more clockwise with your hips. You should be leaning exactly away from where the sword is pointing.
- **b** Bend your sword arm to "curl" the sword towards your head.
  - i The tip will continue around towards the shield side of your body.
  - ii Your hand should be moving towards your head in such a way that it would hit you in the face, if you looked back at it.

4 At the point where your hand almost reaches your head:

- **a** Your sword elbow will start to lift up. Let it do so, and accentuate the movement.
- **b** This will stop the forward motion of your hand. Make sure this happens.
  - i The sword hand will stop in front of your face, at about eye level. If it moves much farther forward, the force of the blow will be reduced.
- **c** Rotate your shield shoulder further, in a clockwise direction (if you are right-handed).
- **d** The blade will pass over, and in front of your head.
  - i This is possible, because you will be leaning away from the blade.
  - ii Try to continue to lean forward and past your opponent, with your shield shoulder leading. Try to make your second step (with your sword foot) as late in the technique as possible, preferably not until after your second blow has struck.
- **e** Allow your back foot to come off of the ground, and move towards your other foot, with the two dragging. You will be balanced on your shield foot.

f You can allow your shield to push into your opponent's shield in a sliding press.

5 Your motion will carry you to your opponent's sword side, and your momentum should carry you past him.

a The target is your opponent's helm, just in back of the ear. You should be in a controlled fall, when you strike.

b The impact of the blade hitting the target will arrest your forward momentum, allowing you to catch your balance by moving your sword foot behind and past your shield foot.

Variation 1b – Horizontal Pass

Description

This variation is most useful when used against any opponent. Its purpose is to get the blade to the second strike very quickly, but with power. Your weight will shift from your sword foot to your shield foot, but you retain your position. It is quicker when the targets of both strikes are high, but it can be effectively used in a low-to-high combination. It can also involve a shield punch or snatch. This variation uses a horizontal plane for the transition between the two blows. It does require a commitment of weight to the shield foot, but the commitment is very much less than is required by variation 1a.

Stance

I prefer to use these techniques from my standard stance, but I believe it could be used with a stance that had the sword-foot forward.

Setup

The off-side blows that result from this technique are usually shorter ranged than the initial blow, so it is necessary to lean slightly in and to your shield side, with the shield shoulder leading, to obtain the proper distance. A short, sliding step would be useful, but if executed properly, the technique does not allow time for that. Since the effectiveness of this technique depends on the quickness of the transition between the blows, it is useful to keep both blows high, leaving the plane of the backswing in its initial position.

Timing

This variation of the technique is best used in the middle of a combination, or when rapidly closing from medium range.

Execution

1 Throw a forehand blow to towards your opponent.

2 Start the side return.

a As your blade moves back, it should be thrown wide, to the sword side, about 30 to 45 degrees from straight back.

b Do not let your arm fully extend to the back.

c Your abdominal muscles should be tight during the entire technique. In fact, your whole body, above the hips, should be nearly rigid, except for the necessary movement of the arms.

3 When the blade reaches the furthest back point:

a Lean towards your shield shoulder, while rotating slightly more clockwise with your hips. You should be leaning exactly away from where the sword is pointing.

b Bend your sword arm to "curl" the sword towards your head.

i The tip will continue around towards the shield side of your body.

ii Your hand should be moving towards your head in such a way that it would hit you in the face, if you looked back at it.

4 At the point where your hand almost reaches your head:

a Your sword elbow will start to lift up. Let it do so, and accentuate the movement.

b This will stop the forward motion of your hand. Make sure this happens.

i The sword hand will stop in front of your face, at about eye level. If it moves much farther forward, the force of the blow will be reduced.

c Rotate your shield shoulder further, in a clockwise direction.

d The blade will pass over your head. This is possible, because you will be leaning away from the blade.

e Allow your weight to move from your back foot to the front foot, but do not allow the back foot to come completely off of the ground

f It is possible to insert a quick shield punch, or even a shield snatch, just as the sword comes around the back corner, but this requires practice to develop the necessary movement and timing.

g The target should be your opponent's helm.

5 You will end up with most of your weight on your front foot. This allows you freedom to move your back foot, and can lead into effective following techniques, most notably, a slot-shot, or a simple forehand blow.

a Either of these can be executed quickly after the main technique, because the main attack leaves you about two thirds of the way into an overhead return.

b A wrap is also possible, but is more difficult because of the requirement of a commitment of your weight to your shield foot.

Variation 2 – Overhead to Body

Description

This variation is most useful when used against an opponent who fights with the same hand that you do. Its purpose is to produce a second strike very quickly, and with considerable power, to the offside body. Your weight will shift from your sword foot to your shield foot, but you retain your position. Since the second strike comes in at a downward angle of about 45 degrees, it must be set up with an initial blow towards a low target, to allow for an upward return of 45 degrees to define the swing plane. It can also involve a shield hook, which involves extending the leading edge of your shield into the blocking path of your opponent's shield as it moves from the initial block to attempt to block the second, offside strike. It does require a commitment of weight to the shield foot, but the commitment is less than is required by either of the horizontal variations.

Figure 30

While I cannot say for certain that he developed this variation, I first noticed it being used to great effect by Duke Jade of Starfall, of the West.

Stance

I prefer to use these techniques from my standard stance, but I believe it could be used with a stance that had the sword-foot forward. In the latter case, the footwork, described below, would have to be modified.

Setup

The offside blows that result from this technique are very much shorter ranged than the initial blow, so it is necessary to use some footwork to obtain the proper distance. In addition, the first blow is more of a feint that lands, rather than a full-force blow.

Timing

This variation of the technique is best used either when you are in middle sword range, or at longer range as part of a combination which quickly closes the range.

Execution

1 If you are not already in middle range, use a short, sliding step with your shield foot, while throwing the initial strike towards your opponent's leg. (If you start the combination from middle range, the slide step may or may not be necessary.)

2 Immediately recover the sword foot, so it moves up very close behind your shield foot. (If you start the combination from middle range, the recovery step will not be necessary.)

3 Start the side return while executing another short, sliding step with your shield foot. This should get you into the proper range. (If you start the combination from middle range, the slide step will likely not be necessary.)

- **a** As your blade moves back, it should be thrown wide, to the sword side, about 30 to 45 degrees from straight back.
- **b** Do not let your arm fully extend to the back.
- **c** Your abdominal muscles should be tight during the entire technique. In fact, your whole body, above the hips, should be nearly rigid, except for the necessary movement of the arms.

4 When the blade reaches the furthest back point:

- **a** Lean towards your shield shoulder, while rotating slightly more clockwise with your hips. You should be leaning exactly away from where the sword is pointing.
- **b** Bend your sword arm to "curl" the sword towards your head.
  - i The tip will continue around towards the shield side of your body.
  - ii Your hand should be moving towards your head in such a way that it would hit you in the face, if you looked back at it.
  - iii If, at this point, you are going to use the shield block, as noted in the description, above, you should start opening your shield, eventually pointing the leading edge towards the sword side of your opponent's body. Don't move it over any further, or you will interfere with your second strike. Don't extend your arm, either, or you will hit your opponent with your shield.

5 At the point where your hand almost reaches your head:

- **a** Your sword elbow will start to lift up. Let it do so, and accentuate the movement.
- **b** This will stop the forward motion of your hand. Make sure this happens.
  - i The sword hand will stop in front of your face, at about eye level. If it moves much farther forward, the force of the blow will be reduced.
- **c** Rotate your shield shoulder further, in a clockwise direction.

d The blade will pass over your head. This is possible, because you will be leaning away from the blade.

e Allow your weight to move from your back foot to the front foot, but do not allow the back foot to come completely off of the ground

f The target should be your opponent's offside ribs.

6 You will end up with most of your weight on your front foot, but not as much as with variation 1b. This allows you freedom to move your back foot, and can lead into effective following techniques described in variation 1b. Since the weight commitment to the shield foot is less, it is easier to step in with your sword foot, following execution of the second strike (if you wish to do so).

Variation 3 – Overhead to the Upper Back

Description

This variation is most useful when used against an opponent who fights with the opposite hand from you. Its purpose is to produce a quick, powerful second strike coming from a radically different angle from the first strike. The initial blow is struck forehand to the lower leg on your opponent's sword side. The second strike is to the upper back, on your opponent's shield side. This second strike is performed with a tip-down, vertical blade.

While I cannot say for certain that he developed this variation, I first noticed it being used to great effect by Duke Anton Tremaine, of Atlantia.

Stance

I prefer to use these techniques from my standard stance, but I believe it could be used with a stance that had the sword-foot forward.

Setup

The offside blows that result from this technique are very much shorter ranged than the initial blow, so it is necessary to use some footwork to obtain the proper distance. In fact, your shield shoulder should almost be touching. In addition, the first blow is a feint that never actually lands, but rather, it is pulled immediately into a vertical, upward return, which defines the plane of the sword path.

Timing

This variation of the technique is best used when you are at long range as part of a combination, which quickly closes the range.

Execution

1 It is necessary to move in very close, during the first strike. Use a long, sliding step with your shield foot, while throwing the initial, forehand strike towards your opponent's leg.

a The strike is actually a feint that does not land. The blade should be pulled up, through a sharp curve into a vertical, upward path, as it crosses, approximately, halfway to the target.

i The initial blow cannot be thrown with full power, or it will be very difficult, if not impossible, to curve the blade up.

ii The method to use to curve the blade is to pull your sword elbow in close to, and in front of, your body. At the same time, curl your sword hand so that, if opened, the palm would face you.

2 As you curl the blade up, allow your back foot to come off of the ground. It will pass behind your front foot; so start turning your body slightly in a clockwise direction (if you are right-handed).

3 Your sword hand should move up to the point where it is about level with your forehead, and about six inches in front of your face. Without pausing, and at the same time:

a Turn your body strongly clockwise (if you are right-handed).

b Continue your step with your sword foot, closing the distance so that your shield is pressing on the outside edge of your opponent's shield.

c Stop the upward motion of the sword hand by allowing your sword elbow to rotate up and out from your body on your sword side.

i This will transfer the center of rotation of the sword from the middle of your body, to your hand, thereby reducing the radius of rotation, and causing the sword to speed up.

4 The clockwise turning of your body, combined with the weight shift towards your sword foot (which should be moving past, and in back of, your shield foot, will provide considerable leverage to cause the tip of the sword to rise very quickly.

5 The tip of the sword will quickly pass through the top of its arc, and move even more quickly down the other side.

6 The clockwise rotation of your body will cause a slight precession of the plane of the blow, allowing the blade to impact on your opponent's upper back, in the vicinity of the scapula of the shield shoulder.

a Your shield should, at the same time, be pressing into and across your opponent's shield, possibly turning your opponent slightly counter-clockwise so that the target is more accessible.

b Your weight should be entirely on your shield foot. Your sword foot does not touch the ground until just after the blow lands.

7 From here, you have a choice of following techniques.

a You can pull your blade back, over your head, in a looping backswing, and then strike an overhead blow towards your opponent's head.

i This takes advantage of the positioning of your sword foot.

ii As you swing, your shield foot should start to move out and to your left, and farther behind your opponent.

b You can pull your blade back over your head, allowing the tip to drop behind your back. This will cause your sword elbow to rise. As you start to move your shield foot out and to the left, pull the elbow down and across your chest, while turning your sword hip quickly in the same direction. This will produce a quick, hard vertical blow.

SECTION 11 - GLOSSARY

Center of Mass

This is the "balance point" of an object. With the human body, it is somewhere behind the navel. In a sword, it is usually near, or just in front of the hilt. It is useful to note that the "balance point" of a sword is really an average of several balances. In a sword, there are three important balances to consider; lengthwise, front-to-back, and side-to-side. While the average balance point is the one that applies in most circumstances, the others will have some subtle effects on the handling characteristics of the sword.

Center of Rotation

When a mass (in this instance, a human body) is rotating, the axis about which that rotation is occurring is called the center of rotation. In the case of a sword swing, it would be a nearly-vertical line which passes through the body, entering through the head, and passing through the hips. The exact orientation of the line will vary with the technique being employed.

Florentine

In the SCA this term generally refers to the style of fighting with two broadswords, one in each hand. Less often, it refers to the style of fighting with broadsword and dagger. Its original reference is to a style of rapier and dagger fighting. However, the term is used so widely that in this paper it will be used to refer to the two-broadsword style.

Moment Arm

The distance between the center of rotation and the center of mass of the object being moved. The length is directly proportional to the force required to move the object from rest, and to the force applied when it hits.

Radius of Rotation

This is the distance between the center of rotation and the center of mass. It is the same measurement as the moment arm, but refers to distance rather than force application.

SECTION 12 – AUTHOR'S NOTE

This is a work in progress. I fully intend to expand and upgrade the document. There are several subjects that have not been treated, and others that need more explanation.

In choosing techniques to include in my system, I take those that fit into the overall style. There are valid techniques that I do not use because they interrupt the flow of my movements, or because I have chosen a similar one to emphasize. Also, we are all different in our physical capabilities. There are some movements that I can't do. If they are needed for a certain technique, I won't use that technique.

Also, I don't use techniques that I wouldn't use against the best fighters. Why practice a technique that only works on those who are not highly skilled.

I think that my basic style can be used by anybody, but the application of the techniques may have to be modified to match personal physical capabilities, personal preferences, or local situations.

In any case, I hope this document is useful to the readers. I am very willing to correspond on the subject.

Comments from readers would be appreciated.

*** * ***

I'm always happy to discuss any aspects of fighting. You are welcome to contact me at:

paul@bellatrix.org or **belatrix1@aol.com**