

**Become The  
Martial Artist  
You Were  
Meant to Be**

*By Taking Charge of Your  
Learning*

by Keith Pascal

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# Introduction

Why are you interested in the martial arts? Be honest. What is driving you to practice repetitive movements over and over again?

Is your primary goal to defend yourself or others? Do you want to defend yourself at school? Are you afraid of walking across campus to your dorm at night? Do you have a family to protect?

Are you into the arts for the sport and competition? Do you want to win trophies for Kata demonstration and sparring? Do you enjoy the comraderie of traveling to tournaments with your team?

Do you have other reasons for studying martial arts? Are you in it for the money? Do you enjoy the philosophy and literature of the martial arts? Is it a family activity?

Look inward. **Knowing why you are studying will help you to develop achievable goals.**

As you achieve your goals, you will get closer and closer to becoming the martial artist you were meant to be. It's an ongoing process with some reward and a little frustration along the way. It's worth it to strive to reach your potential.



## Taking Charge of Your Learning Involves Making Choices

You have some choices to make, before you actually plan out your goals. Making these choices, and recognizing some factors, of which you may not have control, is the first step to taking charge of your learning.

Did you catch that? **Some of the factors that could help or hurt your learning process are beyond your control.** Take body type, for example. My wife is petite — she is only 5'2. I, on the other hand, am pretty hefty — as of this writing, I weigh over 275 lbs.

Now, she could gain a bunch of weight, and I could go on a starvation diet, but our body *types* remain the same. So, it would be ridiculous for me to fight like she does, and vice versa. If I were to try to be Kate, then I wouldn't be the martial artist, I was meant to be.



So, we make choices when we can. One choice that I have is whether to spend the majority of my time **strengthening my weaker talents**, or do I **focus on my strengths**?

If I work on my weakness, I should try to have quicker, dartier movements, like my wife. If I want to focus on my strengths, then I should continue to work on elbow strikes, and my other power moves.

### **Or do I divide my time evenly and work on both?**

As I said before, you have choices to make. Even your limitations offer you choices in how they will be dealt with.



## Home Study or a Formal Class?

Are you limited by your location? Are you lacking good instruction in your area? If you aren't currently taking classes, be sure to read my report on finding the perfect school. **As a special bonus**, I have included it , in it's entirety, in [Appendix A of this e-book](#).

**You're welcome.**



If you have good instruction available to you in your area, then I'd opt for a formal class over home study every time. It's so much easier to travel the path, with a good guide.

Note: And for the less metaphorically inclined — it's easier to learn from an expert martial artist, than it is by struggling on your own.

If you have to study on your own, if there isn't a small class being taught out of an expert's garage in your area, if you can't find a black belt willing to tutor you, then you will learn on your own. Having no choice, is a choice — I guess.

You will arm yourself with course, e-books, video tapes, and books. There will be a particular course that will jazz you, for some reason. It will be your starting point. You will keep coming back to it, no matter what other tactics, and techniques you assimilate.

For me, it was all that was Bruce Lee. I wanted to learn the system that he developed — I wasn't as interested in his on-screen martial arts. I wanted to be able to do the feats of his that I read about. Accomplishments against real bad guys — real martial artists with a bad case of ego.



## Traditional or Modern Martial Arts?

Again, depending on what's offered in your area, you may or may not have a choice. If you do have a choice, then my advice would be for you to choose based on your emotional desires.

I say emotional, because **you are going to need a lot of motivation to stick with a martial art**. Logic just won't keep you going. Your emotions — fear, longing, etc. will.



So, do you see yourself winning competitions? Then the obvious answer would be to find a school that cranks out a lot of trophy winners. There are lots of classical-based schools that display trophies in their windows and/or lobbies.

Make sure that everyone learns to win, not just the top few. Then join the program — practice diligently. And **add some of the touches outlined in this e-book**. Just because you follow their program, doesn't mean you can't develop goals, focus your practice sessions on specific areas, and develop some skills that you feel you need.



If, instead of winning tournaments, you want to lessen the amount of uglies out there who can do you harm, then maybe an eclectic style would be your cup of tea. Combining elements of many different styles to find your perfect combination could be your goal of a lifetime.



## Other Questions to Ask

Will you be studying alone, or do you have a buddy? Buddies get votes too in deciding on a school, or which book to study.

How long are you planning on staying in the area? Is being able to continue your studies important to you? Are you going to move at the end of the year? Worse, is your teacher planning on moving?

Of course, it's hard to plan for the unexpected. Anything can happen. But knowing a few contingencies wouldn't hurt.



Note: One of the biggest losses imaginable would be to lose a teacher of the caliber of Bruce Lee (will there ever be again?). Imagine what his students must have gone through, when he died so unexpectedly.

As devastating as this loss was, and believe me, from talking to many of his original students, it was more of a loss than some of them could imagine — they still picked themselves up, and pursued alternate paths.

Some of Bruce's students studied with the more senior of his students. Some focused on learning about the martial arts of their heritage and combining it with some of what they had learned from Bruce. Some pursued Wing Chun, adding in the Bruce Lee element — thus they were in a sense following Bruce Lee's path historically.

The point is, they all did something. They might not have had one of the greatest fighters of all time in their corners anymore, but that didn't mean that they couldn't continue becoming the artists they were meant to be.



By asking all of these questions, you should start to get a sense of where you'd like to go in the arts. As you ask your questions, start to do research. Read articles on becoming better in martial arts. Again, read my article on finding the perfect school. Research what's available in your area.

If you already have a martial arts teacher, maybe you could talk to him or her about your goals. I have goals for all of my students, yet few of them have ever bothered to ask me about them. They just assume that I am there to help them achieve their goals. That too.

Maybe you could work on your goals with your teacher. Or, better yet, respect your teacher's time. You work on your goals first, then run them by your teacher. Take charge of your learning, even when seeking advice.



# 1

## Speed Your Improvement By Learning About Goals

I have included a section on goals in just about every major piece of how-to information that I have published to date. They're that important.

I wish I knew who said:

“There are three types of people in this world: those who make things happen, those who watch things happen, and those who wondered ...what happened?”

To make productive things happen in your life, you need goals. If you don't know where you're going, then how are you going to get there?



Do you want to wander slowly through the training process, occasionally improving, or do you want a tight, efficient method for training yourself to be the self-defense machine, you were meant to be? You choose.



## Learning About Goals

One of your first goals should be to learn about goals. I kid you not. Learn about keeping them in a positive voice, expressing them in the present, chunking goals, etc....

**A few of my favorite books on goals are:**

- \* **The Magic Lamp**, by **Keith Ellis** ( 1998, updated edition)
- \* **Unlimited Power**, by **Anthony Robbins** (1997)
- \* **Success Is Just One Wish Away**, by **Jon Spoelstra** (1998)



If you want a good plan that works, try **The Magic Lamp**. If you want a lot of very useful information, that you can keep coming back to, then try **Unlimited Power**. If you want a good read — a nice story, that will leave you feeling inspired, as though the changes you are planning will work, then try **Success Is Just One Wish Away**.

Don't worry if some of these books seem to have a business flavor. They apply to what you want to accomplish.



All of the very successful people I know constantly work on their goals. Don't you want to learn more than twice as fast as people without goals?

Do you think for one minute that the best martial artists out there just hit the mat day after day and randomly flip from one technique to another? The best ones don't.

**The best martial artists train to specific outcomes.** They know where they want to go with their skill. And if what they are trying to do has never been accomplished before, then they can at least imagine the successful outcome in their heads.

**To plant your goals firmly in your mind, write them down on paper.** For some, that's a big step. Most of you will just read through this e-book, without caring enough to actually write down your martial arts goals.

Don't pass up this opportunity to really improve. Be different from the 95% of the other readers won't lift a pencil to actually improve their skill level. I can't hint any more strongly than that.

If, after my little pep talk, you still aren't moving, then take this procrastination one step further. Go buy **The Magic Lamp**, by **Ellis**. This way, you can procrastinate by reading another book, before you get started.

Who knows, maybe it will do a better job of lighting the fire underneath.



## Which goals Should I Work On?

When thinking about your own desires, you may wish to formulate goals about technique gathering. If you are working within the context of one style, then you buy books on that particular style.

If you don't have any limitations of style imposed on you, then think of yourself as a sculptor of styles. And as a sculptor, you need to have some stone before you start chiseling. We'll talk about chiseling later.

For now, you want to add some meat to your knowledge. This is a first step. If you already have an arsenal of decent techniques and tactics, this may not be a *first* step for you.



In the world of magic, the wiser magicians say that it's much better to be able to fool everyone with only eight tricks (your whole repertoire), than to be able to execute 100 tricks poorly, and fool nobody.

In general, I agree that it's much better to have a pared-down style. My system doesn't have a lot of variety, but it's pretty darn efficient (if I do say so myself).

**—BUT—**

I have a whole bag of tricks too. Sometimes, the only way to win is to surprise your opponent with something unfamiliar.



We'll actually talk more about building fancy techniques in the section **Building Techniques Before Eliminating**. Keep in mind, that you can build a ton, and still take it slowly, if that's your goal.

Just incorporate your goals into each of your practice sessions. You can learn an awful lot of moves, if you tackle 3-4 per hour, over the course of a couple of months. Make sure you continue reinforcing the older moves. In other words, don't forget the old ones, as you learn the new.



# 2

## Doesn't How Good I Can Become Have to Do with Style?

If you have ever pondered this chapter's title, then I think that you are really asking two questions:

1. Which is the best style out there
2. How do I get a solid foundation in the martial arts?

I hate to disappoint you, but there is no one best style out there. If there were, everyone would be doing it, right?

Of course, everyone has their bias anyway. For me, I think **Bruce Lee** was on the right track. He wanted to study all forms of efficient fighting. He studied; he analyzed; he formed hypotheses. And he tested them — over and over, on just about every style out there.

In my humble opinion, he brought martial arts further, than anyone else in the 20th Century. If you aren't thoroughly immersed in a different system, you might want to consider studying at least the principles of **Jeet Kune Do** (JKD), Bruce's Art. You could do worse.



## Special Bonus:

And even if you follow a traditional style, you might want to consider going a bit eclectic. Borrow from different styles. Study the principles of Bruce Lee. Even Modify some of the techniques of the traditional style that you are studying.

If your style doesn't favor innovation, you should still leave yourself open to new possibilities. How can I say this?

Well, I consider Karate to be the most traditional (classically frozen) of the martial arts. But even the founder of modern-day Karate didn't want his art to stagnate.

I read his autobiography a few years back — I was amazed at the similarity between his philosophy and that of Bruce Lee's. Both of them wrote of **constant adaptation, so the style doesn't fossilize**. To remain useful as a form of self defense in a contemporary world, the style has to be able to bend, and change.

We could spend hours discussing why Karate become so set in its ways, and the future of JKD, now that **Bruce Lee** is gone. But the point is, that maybe you should consider developing your ability to seek out the best for you in the arts.

So, to speed you on your way, I have included an added bonus. In **Appendix B**, I have included my report, **Be Different to Become the Best**. You should give it a gander. It will even have suggestions, where you don't have to **betray** your classical style.



## Getting a Solid Foundation

Find a decent school, or a decent teacher. Use criteria of your own, and some that you may have read in [Appendix A, Finding the Perfect School in Your Area](#).

If you have decided to go it alone, get a practice partner. Or form a group. Motivate each other. Read about motivation. Read about goal setting, and then ....

Practice,practice, practice, practice, practice, practice, practice,  
practice, practice, practice....

### Get the point?



Seriously, one of the best ways to build your foundation, while practicing a lot, is the following course of study:

1. **Practice the basics, first.** Make them a part of your daily ritual. Never forget them, ever. While practicing basics, up the level a bit, by mixing in some more advanced techniques.

This will keep you motivated — different techniques are interesting. And you will improve faster by always rising to the challenge.

2. At some point, **start building.** Add a lot of techniques. Give yourself a giant repertoire of moves. Experiment. Find your particular style.

As you add techniques, start developing your **B.S. Filter**. Figure out what **is** and what **isn't** practical. Learn to modify techniques to make them work.

3. **Know some of your underlying philosophies.** For me, I never block before attacking. I try to move my weapon before my body. I try to as direct as possible. And I have a bunch more. Can you guess where I read about these principles? (Bruce Lee)

4. After You build, it's time to **eliminate**. You pare down to an efficient style. You learn to rely on timing and distance. You have already combined techniques and tactics. Now it's time to eliminate ... incompatible movements, for example.

You reduce the complicated to ... what works.

5. **The Stage of No Pattern:** If you ever get to this stage, you have arrived. I'm not there yet — not even close. In this stage, you just react. One move doesn't necessarily have to follow another. You just react. Your body knows to go for openings. It knows not to commit until just the right instant.

You subconsciously recognize fakes and feints, and you don't get suckered. You always are aware of centerline theory, etc.... In short, you have attained the level that Bruce Lee wrote about.



Even though this isn't the only way, **many achieve martial success using this line of study**. So, let's talk about some of these steps in greater detail. And after that, I think it only fair to give you some tips on timing and Distance, Ranges, etc....



# 3

## Build Techniques Before Eliminating

Developing an efficient system is a little like writing a term paper for school. The best writers knew that in order to write a solid ten-page paper, they sometimes had to write as many as fifteen pages. They built a foundation loaded with lots of solid facts.

Later, after they collected and examined each fact, they tried to fit it in to the paper. They had to eliminate loose words. They chopped away at the imprecise. As they whittled away at the paper, they saw a fifteen-page report dwindle down to ten pages.

At first they were sad, reluctant to give up their hard-earned facts. Then they realized that the ten-page paper was solid. It was strong. It was efficient.



Will you **become the martial artist you were meant to be** by building? In the beginning stages of development, you should learn as many techniques as possible. But not necessarily all at the same time. Don't confuse yourself.

Expose yourself to technique. Practice it. All the while, you work on developing hand-eye coordination in the martial arts. You learn to move. A variety of techniques will help you to learn to move in different ways.

Besides learning these techniques for your own arsenal, **it's easier to defend against techniques that you're already familiar with**, wouldn't you agree? Especially if you have already worked out counters to these techniques.



Now is the time to learn the fancy "stuff." Learn the reverses that will confuse. Learn sweeps that work! Learn Wrist Locks!!!



(If you already own **Wrist Locks: From Protecting Yourself to Becoming an Expert**, then at this development stage of learning would be the time to work on the chapters on **patterns, counters and reversals**, and **inventing your own locks**. You should also be able to effect any of the locks in the chapter **A Dozen Super Techniques to Promote Thought**. If you don't already own this book, get it! What are you waiting for? —Ordering Info. at the end of this report.)



## Don't Forget that Good Foundation

We just talked about building a good foundation in the last chapter. While you're learning all of these fancy maneuvers, don't forget to work on the basics.

It's surprising how easily good technique can fly out the window, when we start getting fancy. Don't let it happen to you.



You need a foundation of good kicks and punches. Never forget that. You need speed, and you need power. Work on both.



Start a collection of articles. Experiment with different exercises. Figure out a way to measure results accurately. Record your results.

While working on speed, work on reaction time—that's learning to react to someone else's speed. Also, work on eliminating telegraphed motions—that's learning to make it difficult for someone else to react to your speed.



## Don't Reinvent the Wheel

Yes, there is benefit to figuring it all out on your own, while adding new techniques. But you have to ask yourself two questions:

1. Do you have the time (a most precious commodity, indeed)?
2. Do you have the skill to get yourself to your desired level?

There really is an advantage to working things out for yourself, but there is also an advantage to do so after you progress to certain skill level. **The greater your initial skill, the better you'll improve on your own.** When you're a beginner, there is a danger that you'll go off on the wrong track.

**Finding a great instructor will put you on the right track.** If you find an instructor who has already combined styles, or has a progressive attitude, you may decide to stick with what has come before.

If your teacher is truly progressive, then you will almost automatically glean what **works for you.** You'll be on your way to achieving your goal(s).



Even though you'll learn faster from others, **you can still supplement your learning with books and videos**. I read lots of books. Why? It's sort of like getting an edge on the edge that I'm getting. Get it?

So, keep in mind, that you can build with an instructor, you can learn from anyone more advanced, you can learn on your own, with a practice partner, from books and videos.... Use everything in your power to get yourself to your desired level. You can do it.



Note: This is a small plug. Even if you aren't a martial arts teacher (yet), you still might want to consider reading an e-book that I wrote. Sorry, it's not free.

It's called **Secrets of Teaching Martial Arts More Effectively**. You could definitely take learning into your own hands, if you knew the secrets that teachers are starting to learn about, in order to help their students improve ... **as quickly and efficiently as possible**.

I hesitate mentioning it here, because it does cost money. But it does have **useful tips** on keeping a martial arts notebook, as well as picking the methods of change for your training sessions.

It does not talk about specific techniques, like which punch to use when. **It does tell you how to teach, so people learn the moves better and faster.**



# 4

## Eliminating and Beyond

Once you start to get really good, you'll naturally eliminate moves that don't work for you. Don't let that be the only way you simplify.

Maybe you'll decide that low kicks to the groin, knee, or shin are much more efficient than high kicks to the head. Maybe you'll eliminate the fancy technique that relies on too many variables and instead just **hit** when you see an opening (**or better yet, at this stage, when you create one**).

Someday, you may get to the point where you're so efficient that you intercept your opponent's attack with one of your own, not waiting your turn, so to speak.

You only have efficient direct movements in your system. **Does this sound like anyone's system you've heard about?** Nod nod. wink wink. **Hint: JFJKD.**

Think of this process as getting rid of some of the clutter. You don't want incompatible movements in your system, for example.

You also don't want techniques where you have to think about the sequence. You should be **reacting** at this point in your development. If you aren't, you either haven't practiced the technique enough, or this isn't the technique for you.



It's pretty obvious that you can't learn to react without thought, if you have to think about the sequence, wouldn't you agree? Two contradictory ideas.



You pare down the inefficient moves — the **spinning techniques**, where you turn your back on your opponent — anything **flying that leaves you in the air, off balance**, etc. — and anything else that you have determined has too many flaws to be included. These techniques might be fun to practice, and **you should definitely practice them, so you can learn how to defend against them** — but you don't want to automatically react using them in a crisis situation.

The whole time that you pare and eliminate, keep in mind that **you are building your own foundation** — you are working towards the goal of reaction without thought. Ultimately, you don't even want to rely on specific technique. You just want to react.

**Bruce Lee** wrote about achieving this state that is **beyond technique**. He felt that you couldn't plan for the technique. At that ultimate state, you just react.

You don't plan to do either a **vertical** or a **horizontal** punch — your reaction is unplanned. Your fist just comes in at precisely the right angle, in the right spot, on your attacker's body.

And if a kick would be a better counter, you instinctively react instead with ... say, a stop-kick **to the closest weapon to your body** — in this case, your opponent's shin.

Your follow-ups are as equally precise. You seem to always find your opponent's openings — even when they weren't there an instant before.



When Bruce wrote about self-actualization, he expressed some ideas that apply to this self-actualized higher stage of your art:

“Flow in the total openness of the living moment.”

“Be flexible, so you can change with change.”

“My only sure reward is **in** my actions and not **from** them. The quality of my reward is in the depth of my response — the centralness of the part of me I act from.”

**(Jeet Kune Do: Bruce Lee’s Commentaries on the Martial Way, edited by John Little, Tuttle Publishing, 1997, page 351)**

Undoubtedly, I will write more on this state in the future. But realistically, I really am not even close to leaving behind all technique.

Sure, my reactions are automatic, but I still plot and plan. I still try to sucker my opponent, sorry to say this, so I can use a pre-planned technique. Nope, I am not there yet.

I don’t feel that I am ready to express my full view of the subject. I still have a lot of development — maybe a lifetime’s worth....



# 5

## Other Important Elements to Consider

I would be remiss, if I were to just send you out in the world with advice of **get a few goals to become a better martial artist**. It even sounds weak to me. There are so many other elements to consider. These subcategories of martial arts training are especially important, if you are going to take charge of your own learning.



### Timing and Distance

You could write books and books about timing and distance. So, how am I going to cover the subject in a few brief paragraphs?

Actually, I could, if I had to, sum it all up in one very long sentence: **Don't give your opponents what they want in regards to either distance, or to the specific timing involved when the distance closes to striking range.**

For example, if you could always get your opponent to move in on you at a specific time, you could hit through the opening that would be created when your opponent started to throw a technique at you. The better your timing, the more leeway you'd have on technique.



## Ranges and Other Forms of Thought

Every couple of years in the martial arts, there seems to be a new bandwagon. As the newest craze rolls by, everyone jumps on. The masses flock to the newest publicized style. Some stick with this new style, even after the initial craze dies, while others move on to the next style.

A lot of the diehards discuss principles, rather than contrasting styles. One ongoing discussion involves ranges.

**Some people get too caught up in definitions**—have you learned to fight at a **long range**? Did you switch to **short-range mode**, when your opponent came in on you? How did you deal with the **middle range, that wasn't quite short enough to be a short range**, but....?

I just want to strangle some people (**gee, which range would that be?**)!!! My advice: Use appropriate techniques based on your opponent's distance. Arrrgh.

Don't try a long kick, if your opponent is right on top of you, and don't try to elbow an opponent who is eight feet away.

Actually, I do occasionally think about range. Summed up? When I'm at a long range, I stay way too far out of range—there is no chance that my opponent could get to me with a single technique, before I could react. And when I'm in close, I get in very very close (you can smell my breath).



### Big Big Tip:

**I almost never hang out in “sparring range.”**



## Sparring Range

In tennis, there is a certain area, from the service line forward about eight feet, that is considered **no man's land**. Bad things happen to those who camp out there, be they man or woman—**they get slaughtered**.

You should consider sparring range a bad place to be. I'm talking about the area where if your opponent kicks, you just move back and tap the foot with your hand, and if you kick, your opponent does the same.

Don't give your opponent the range, he/she wants—including this range. Stay farther out. Or get so close that you can rely on feeling, rather than sight (look to the style of **Wing Chun** for an activity called **Chi Sao**).

In the classes I teach, I sometimes take an imaginary point away, if my students hang out in “no man's land.” I belabor this point all of the time.



## Fitting it All Together

Getting good is all about being able to confidently **handle more and more situations**. You'll get to a point where you've practiced at all ranges, you've gone against opponents of all sizes, you've tried your hand (and foot) against multiple attackers, you have a variety of tactics to use against weapons, etc....

**Make sure everything fits. Practice, so you'll know what to do when.**

Remember to resolve conflicts of technique—sometimes you can't get to a certain follow-up move from the position you're in. Learn to adjust. If you know lots of **outs**, it shouldn't bug you; you just move on to a different technique. **You flow without thinking about it into something else.**

Practice, so the movements really do become automatic. Learn to react without thinking. Strive for that no technique state that we talked about. Invent exercises to help you toward this oh so important goal.



## Evaluate and Improve

Never get to be so cocky, that you can't learn. You also don't learn, when you're busy strutting your own stuff.

First **look for the good in others' techniques**. Can you modify that which isn't perfect into something good? If something isn't good, why isn't it? Why can't it be modified? How would you react to any of these techniques being executed on you? Analyze.

Evaluate. Modify. Analyze. Practice, practice, practice, practice.....



## A Few Adrenalin-Proof Moves

While all you work on really becoming a better martial artist, you still need some practical self defense techniques and tactics. You need some moves to get you by, just in case. You need some adrenalin-proof moves.

**When you are really scared, things don't always work as planned.** You need something that will work. Some practical techniques, where they work, even if your opponent switches leads. You need techniques, where the same technique could work for either a punch from the **right** or **left** hand by your attacker.

You also want to know that you can always do a groin hit, eye jab, or some other devastatingly direct move.



## Last Bit of Advice

If you feel as though you know just enough to get into some real trouble, if you know there are people out there who could “woop ass on you,” and even if you think you are a great martial artist, I still have a last piece of advice. It hails from my teacher, Steve Golden. To paraphrase him...

### Never Play the Other Person's Game

**In other words:**

- \* **Don't** box with a boxer.
- \* **Don't** grapple with a grappler.
- \* **Don't** exchange high kicks with a Taekwondo expert.

- \* **Don't** try to out-damage the opponent's leg, if you are fighting a true Thai boxer.
- \* **Don't** knife fight with a knife fighter. You get the idea.



**Make your opponent uncomfortable.** Offer up the unfamiliar. If you play the other person's game, on their playing field — I mean try to take them on in the style that they have practiced much longer than you have — you will lose. The math is pretty easy.

Getting to where you react with techniques that truly frustrate your opponent is what this e-book has been all about. Good luck on your journey.

And e-mail me with any questions. I'll see what I can do to make the journey less bumpy.

[kpascal@kerwinbenson.com](mailto:kpascal@kerwinbenson.com)

# Appendix A

## Finding the Perfect Martial Arts School in Your Area

by Keith Pascal

Do you want to find the best school around? Maybe you have a limited budget for self-defense lessons. Do you have your heart set on taking lessons in a certain style?

**Read on!** This article will show you exactly how to find the best lessons for you. Of course there are no guarantees; unfortunately, there are con artists and unskilled teachers in abundance.

Fortunately, this article should greatly increase your chances of finding a decent school to help fulfill your martial arts needs. Remember, there are no guarantees...you have to use your head. Be an informed chooser.



OK. For whatever reason, you've decided to take martial arts and/or self-defense lessons. I separate the two into different categories, because not everyone who takes martial arts does so for self-defense, and not everyone who is interested in self-defense would wish to pursue the arts.

Your choice of schools may depend a lot on your goals. We'll get to those a little later in the article.



By the way, you may have already determined that there either aren't any schools in your area, or there aren't any acceptable schools ( **don't be too hasty; you can learn a lot from many styles, even if they aren't the ultimate style that you'll eventually settle into**).

If you are sure that there is zip available, there is an article on training without a school. e-mail me at [homestudy@kerwinbenson.com](mailto:homestudy@kerwinbenson.com) And also put the words "**home study**" in the body of the message.



The benefit of having a live (competent) instructor over having to figure everything out for yourself is obvious. You get the benefit of your instructor's experience.

If you get a particularly capable teacher, you'll learn to avoid many beginner's mistakes, as well as mistakes that your teacher may have made while developing mastery.

There are two ways to approach finding your school: You could pick by first seeing what's available in your area, and then figuring out what you want from there. This is the practical approach.

Or you could take the sky's-the-limit approach; you first dream about the best style for you. Later you try to tailor your wishes to an available school within a commutable distance.

Let's start this discussion with the practical order of things. Later, we'll see about getting creative.





## Start Asking Around

It has been said that you can form a connection to almost anyone in this world in five steps, or less. You ask five friends, they each ask five friends, etc....

Why not use this to your advantage? Ask around.

### Ask about:

- \* formal schools
- \* gyms
- \* YMCAs offering lessons
- \* blackbelts teaching out of their garages or at community centers
- \* courses being offered at colleges and universities
- \* and even blackbelts and instructors who aren't currently teaching (I have come out of retirement several times at the request of students).



## The Internet

I have two suggestions if you're going to get a "computer assist."

**Number One:** Look to the Internet and local bulletin boards to find instructors in your area.

Warning: don't believe everything you read on bulletin boards. Some people spend a lot of time criticizing anything that's "different" from their school. Besides, do you want to join a school that spends its time bad-mouthing other people?

**Suggestion Number Two:** Ask discussion groups. I participate on certain discussion forums (fora). Every week or two, on one of the discussion lists, someone asks a question like "Where can I find a JFJKD teacher in my area?"

Often a quick response is forthcoming. You never know, until you try.



## The Seminar Circuit

You might try asking local martial arts schools, your chamber of commerce, or checking once again on the Internet to find out when and where there will be seminars in your area.

You might also try nearby major cities. You'd be surprised.

**Some of the true masters actually get out there and travel around teaching seminars.** I have been to oodles of seminars given by some very famous and very qualified people.

You should definitely go to some, if you have the opportunity. They'll give you some practical techniques, as well as give you techniques that will warrant further study, when you get home.

Seminars are to be experienced. I only wish that someone would put out some honest reviews on the seminars available, because I have been to a few dogs too.

Still, overall, seminars tend to energize you. They jazz you. They fill you with a dose and a half of enthusiasm.



## Magazines

Start reading. Are you into **Jeet Kune Do, Karate, Kung Fu, Tae Kwon Do,** etc.? There is a magazine out there for you.

Check your local newsstand, a bookstore with a great magazine selection, or e-mail me (through this publisher) for suggestions...

[bookinfo@kerwinbenson.com](mailto:bookinfo@kerwinbenson.com)

(No, I don't get a kickback from the magazines. I'm just a good Samaritan.)

And don't just read off-line either. There are a bunch of e-zines all of the Net on martial arts. Some are good. A lot aren't.

It's easier to find trash on the Internet, because it's easier to get published on the Net.

If you wade through all of the martial arts e-zines that are just blatant promotions for someone's product, you will eventually find some that are worthwhile reading.

In my own humble opinion, *Martial Arts Mastery: A Tell-All of Tips, Tactics, and Techniques* offers practical advice.

How much does it cost, where can I subscribe, when does it come out, and why is it your humble opinion?

Cost: It's free. Free. FREE!

Head to: <http://www.kerwinbenson.com/mastery.html>

Frequency: Weekly. You'll usually find it in your box on Tuesday (sometimes as early as Monday).

Humble Opinion: Yes, I am the senior editor. I think it's a great e-zine. Every week, you get an editor's message, a feature article, some great tips, a martial arts review or recommendation, and famous quotes that pertain to something in that particular issue of the e-zine.

(Yes, I am sure it's free. And don't worry -- no blatant promotions. Although the readers have requested that I offer them a few special deals. The mix is still about 95% content to 5% soft-sell advertisement.)



## **Now What**

If you have been doing your research (you did stop reading this article long enough to search for all of the possibilities in your area, didn't you?), you have lots of possibilities.

You could have addresses, phone numbers, and even URLs and e-mails (if you're "up-and-running") to athletic clubs, classical dojos, progressive schools, gyms (boxing style), garages, community centers, private teachers, etc....

Now it's time to figure out what you want in an ideal school. Then when you combine your criteria with what's available, you can make an informed choice.



## Let's Get Creative

You have just read about pursuing your martial arts instruction in a very practical manner. You researched. You explored what was available.

And hopefully, you will observe, before you make your final choice. But what if you could take a more creative approach? What if we started this discussion with a sky's the limit attitude?



### Deciding What You Want

If you could take lessons anywhere in the world, from anyone... alive or dead, whom would you pick? Why would you choose that particular master? What does/did this person have to offer?

Whether or not you have good answers to the previous questions, you should explore your goals before deciding on a school and/or teacher.

To figure out your goals, you need to examine your motivation. **Why are you really interested in taking lessons?**

Are you concerned for your safety on the streets? Are you looking for a new sport? Has anyone ever hassled you, and you've decided that you don't like the fear that you feel in your stomach and throat? Are you looking for a way to get in shape?

Note: If you are feeling that fear, and you feel that you need to gain confidence now, you should definitely read my book on **Wrist Locks**. If you could drop an attacker with one hand, **WITHOUT** hitting him (or her), you'd feel confident, wouldn't you?

OK, enough advertising-- each time I mention my book, I feel a touch of guilt. I shouldn't. It's a good book, and it does come with a money-back guarantee. Still, I'd rather not blatantly promote, so let's get back to finding a great school for you.

Your true driving force should help you to decide which style to pursue. If you just want some basics, maybe a limited-time course (like eight weeks at a community center) would suffice.

If you are about to embark on the journey of developing a skill that will help you for the rest of your life, then you need a more serious martial art.



## Sports Competition

Are you interested in competing in a new sport? **Karate**, **Kenpo**, and **Tae Kwon Do** come to mind when I go to tournaments. I have also seen many competitions in **Judo** and **Ju Jitsu**. There are also some of the **Kung Fu** arts represented at our local exhibitions.

## The Progressive Styles

Even though there seem to be tournaments that would include just about every system or style, I still think that the progressive, or more eclectic, styles are too rough for tourney play. They are more concerned with actual self-defense, than a traditional sports competition.

**Jun Fan Jeet Kune Do** and some of the Filipino arts are examples of styles that could potentially be too violent for a proper competition. The eye jabs, groin kicks, shin scrapes, choke holds, etc. are too integral to some of these styles to have them eliminated in a competition.

**Tournaments that rule no kicking below the waist, no hitting to the head, etc. wouldn't work for these more modern arts.**

Note: the JFJKD Nucleus has talked about setting up rules and guidelines in the future for tournaments for their folk. We'll see what happens.

On the other hand, some of the competitions out there allow too much brutality to be considered a sport. Maybe I have just the right level of testosterone in my body, because I have never felt the urge to compete in a truly violent match.

I have a family to enjoy. I don't want to jeopardize anything by having



someone rattle my brains (or my body) in the ring. For me, it's not worth it.

### **The Reputations of Your Possibilities**

Each school carries a reputation. Personally, I don't like schools that spend a lot of time bad-mouthing other schools.

Note: There is a difference between bad-mouthing and teaching tactics against a particular style. I give my students "hints" all of the time. "This is how to take a Tae Kwon Do roundhouse-kick.... Notice how this Karate style telegraphs this particular move...." You get the idea. I'm trying to give my students an advantage. That's why they take lessons from me.

So, how do you separate gossip from the truth. This is a hard one. For example, in my city there are several very prominent **Tae Kwon Do** schools.

**One school is considered a joke by all other schools in the area,** but because of its central location it gets a lot of business.

If you don't know anything about **Tae Kwon Do**, you'd probably have a hard time telling the schools apart. But there is a big difference in the **power** that the schools' students can generate with their techniques.

The difference in the precision of the techniques would only be visible to the trained eye. (Maybe I should take that back; personally, I don't do or teach **Tae Kwon Do**, but even my lower-belted students can see something lacking from this particular school.)



Say you haven't studied with me for a year or two. You haven't learned to tell good from bad when it comes to martial arts.

You feel that it's particularly hard if you're trying to compare apples with oranges--or two completely different styles. So, what do you do?

Either get someone with a trained eye to help (Note: your expert will probably have a particular bias. Keep that in mind), or research the reputation of each school on your own.

Ask around. Call your local better business bureau. Watch several classes at each school. Get a feeling for what each has to offer. Go where

you're comfortable.

Could you ask present students of the school? Sometimes, it's helpful to find a **lapsed** student.

Find out **why** he or she quit. Do take what people say with a grain of salt. But also listen for similar comments. For example, if all of the students think that the teacher is way too aggressive, it may be a factor that you have to seriously consider.



## Some Important considerations

While you're trying to narrow your school options, you should consider some of the following factors. They are important criteria that should affect your choice of school.



### Price

What's the total cost for your lessons? Does your school charge by the lesson? Does it charge by the month?

To compare, you could figure out the cost per lesson. Maybe a cost per hour would be a more accurate gauge.

Are you going to compare facilities? Does it matter to you whether your training area is a slick dojo or a run down garage?

Or should the fee be based on the quality of the teacher?



## Look at the Total Cost

Are there extra fees? Are there hidden fees? Do you have to buy a uniform? From the school? Does the school charge for promotion testing? Do they charge for the belt promotion? Is there a joining fee? Do you have to pay for lessons more than a month in advance?

By the way, never expect a refund if you quit mid-month. It's just not a common practice to give partial refunds.



## Uniforms

I mentioned uniforms in the last section. Are you impressed by a gi? I work out in sweat bottoms or loose jeans with a t-shirt or a sweat shirt.

Do you feel that you need to be more formally dressed? Look at the way the students are dressed.

Does image matter to you? Could you see yourself similarly garbed?

Maybe it doesn't matter how you have to dress; you're insightful enough to see through the clothes. You'll do whatever it takes, including throwing on the particular **garb** of your potential school, if it means that you'll get the best quality instruction available.



## The Instructor's Personality

Does it matter whether your instructor is mean or nice? Ethical or amoral? Rude or polite? Caring for the person or greedy for the money?

If you are embarking on a long-term project (it took me five years to earn my instructor's certificate), you may have to be with the same teacher for a very long time.

Will you be able to stand each other?



## Formal vs. Casual

Do you want to bow to the senior practitioner to be able to enter the dojo?  
Or do you want to tell dirty jokes to your classmates as you warm up for a more serious practice?

There are a lot of schools that fall somewhere between the extremes of the casual and the formal. Again, my advice is to go where you are comfortable.



## Other Criteria

Try to consider everything that matters to you. Look at price, other students attending class, location of school, whether it's self-defense or spots/competition class, etc....

List all of your criteria. I list mine in the form of questions, where an answer of **yes** would be a response in favor of the school. **I then answer each question on a scale of one through five for each school.**

For example, I might ask: "Is this school's fee within my budget?" If one school charges \$50 a month and another \$75, I might give the \$50 school a score of **5** on price and give the \$75 school a score of **2**.

If I were to have a question about the distance of the school from home, the school closest to home would get a **5**, and the one furthest away a **1**.

**Sometimes, I assign a higher value to more important questions.** For example, the choice of style is three times as important to me, as the other questions, so I would assign a maximum score of **15** to that one question.

After you answer each question for each possible school, tally up the scores. If you have a strong win, you have your school.

**You made a logical choice.**



If some scores are close, then you have to make a decision. You could go with your gut feeling.

Which of your high-scoring schools **feels right**? Where could you imagine yourself studying?

Instead of trusting your instincts, you could add more questions to your list. You might break a question into several more specific ones. You could **weight** your questions differently; assign different point values to different questions.

You could base your decision solely on one criterion. Maybe you'll go with the school that has the potential to make you the better martial artist.

What criterion is important to you? What will be the deciding factor?



## Combining The Practical With The Creative

It doesn't matter if you are predominantly creative or mostly practical. You should try to work both approaches into your search.

It's OK to focus on one aspect while searching; just don't forget to include the other. You need balance.

The creative portion of the report, that you just read, helps you decide what you want in a style. The practical approach will teach you how to find all the schools and/or teachers in your area.

Both parts of the report go hand in hand. Unless you're just gung-ho for a certain school that you find in the middle of your search (and even then, I advise that you don't give up your search too soon), you should plan on both researching all that's available AND what kind of school you really want.

Only by blending the two will you really make the best choice.



## It's Time to Quit

Know when you have made a bad choice. Don't be afraid to change schools. If it's not working out, and you didn't sign a contract, maybe it's time to go somewhere else.

At least that's one less school that you'll have to investigate.

On the other hand, **don't be a school hopper**. I can almost pick the students who won't stick it out.

Eventually, if you want to get good, you'll have to find somewhere where you're comfortable. How else are you going to get into the more advanced techniques?



## Good Luck

I hope you find a school that meets your needs. I also hope your school will allow you to combine techniques from multiple systems.

Otherwise, you may have to learn the techniques from my **Wrist Lock book** on the sly.

Either way, knowing these techniques will give you the edge over your classmates. Who knows, if you like the techniques (and your classmates) enough, maybe you'll give the other students my contact information, so they can buy their own copies.

OK, that plug was pretty blatant, don't you think?

For more information on the only book of its kind, go to

<http://www.kerwinbenson.com>

**And good luck finding your school!**



# Appendix B

## **Be Different from Other Martial Artists to Become the Best**

**by Keith Pascal**

Do you want to become much better than you are now at martial arts? Are you willing to open your mind to new possibilities? If you are doing what everyone else is doing, are you willing to learn new skills so you can be different?

Wouldn't you agree that in any field there are usually a few who excel above all others? It seems that everyone else is trying to imitate the few super successes.

Frequently, those few super-successes got that way by doing something different from everyone else. Either **they do the same thing that everyone else is doing, only they do it better**— faster, more efficiently, with a smile, etc.... (Doing the same thing, only better is still defined as doing it “differently,” because it is different from the norm.) **Or they do something different from the industry standard.**

In the martial arts, you have some people who are better, because they do the same type of technique as everyone else, only they are faster, smoother, more accurate, better with their timing, etc....

You also have people who have chosen either lesser-known arts or techniques. They are successful, because they attack and counter with the unfamiliar. They win, because their opponents don't know how to adapt.

This report will start you on the path to doing your martial arts techniques better and differently in order to successfully defeat your attackers and opponents. You will become much better, and you may even have the potential to become the best.



## How Good Do You “Really” Want to Be?

Before we start, let's step back and define what we're after. How can you become the best, if you don't know what the best is?

The **best** may mean different things to different people. Do you want to be the best in your neighborhood? That may be an easily attainable goal. Do you want to be the best in the world? That may be a **bit** harder to accomplish.

You could strive to be the best in your town, at your dojo, in your family, or even in your state. Also, you probably won't be **best** at everything (all aspects of the art). You have to pick and choose.

What will you be best at? —Best at kicks, the fastest, the best grappler— you choose your goal.

You'll also probably have to stick with your goal for awhile, before you really know whether or not it is realistic. Can you be the best in your city?

It depends: what is your measure of success?

Will you have to win a local tournament?

Can you be the best in your family? Maybe you'll never be the best in your family, if your family is composed of professional martial artists.

Maybe your goal will be to be the **fastest** in your family, if you can't be the over all best.

You're going to have to do a lot of research and practice to figure out if your goal is attainable. **You should never give up too soon.**

On the other hand, maybe you shouldn't spend all of your time trying to attain the unattainable (some philosophies argue that the value is in the "pursuit" of the goal, not in the attainment; you choose for yourself).



## Figuring Out How to Be Different

Once you figure out "where" you're going, you'll have to figure out a different way to get there. If you want to be the best by being different, what is different? Different from what or whom?

You do understand that your **different direction has to improve your effectiveness.** Otherwise there's no use in incorporating your differences into your system.

Different for the sake of being different may or may not be useful; being different to improve your effectiveness is definitely a good thing.

You could choose to practice a different style from what's being practiced in your area; that would be different. Maybe you'll do the same style,

but you decide to have a different distance from the norm. Or maybe different timing.

Your goal in being different can be compared to the stock market. If everyone starts buying, the price of a stock goes up.

When the price is very high and there is still a feeding frenzy going on, what do you do? You do the different thing from the crowd. You **sell** at the ideal high price (because everyone else is buying). And during times that everyone is panicking and selling stocks, because the prices are so low, what do you do? **You go against the crowd.**

You **buy** a bunch of stocks at super low prices. (Of course, it is easy to do in the theory, but in practice....)



## Going Against the Grain

So how does all of this apply to the martial arts? You're going to start thinking about going against the grain.

If everyone at your school takes a particular kick by stepping back and blocking, you are going to have to start analyzing that kick to see how you can be different. And you have to be different in a more effective way.

Going back to the kick: could you step in toward your opponent, rather than away from your opponent? If that doesn't seem feasible, because you'd walk right into the kick, **could you step slightly off to the side as you step forward to avoid the kick?**

Imagine the surprise! Your opponent is used to everyone stepping back on this particular kick. Your opponent kicks and expects an almost automatic response— only to find...**BAM**... you've stepped in.

In an instant, you are only two inches away from your opponent's face. Surprise!



## Analysis

That great feeling of surprising your opponent can be yours over and over again, using a variety of moves, with some good old-fashioned research.

**Get a notebook.** And start taking notes. (If you are looked at suspiciously when taking notes, you may have to take mental notes until you get home. Then you can scribble your thoughts in private.)

I Assume that you'll be able to analyze and take notes on more than one occasion. If you can, you should only analyze one component per session. Analyze speed one time. Maybe rhythm the next. Look at distances.

Analyze balance and center of gravity. Anything that you could potentially used against your opponent is fair game. You have a lot of research ahead of you.

Analyze people's reactions, until you can predict an individual's reaction even before he or she reacts. Does the particular reaction create another opening?

If it does, you're on your way to creating a combination or a feint. If you don't mess it all up with poor timing, you'll have a great way for creating an opening.



By the way, if these techniques start seeming predictable to you, you should ask yourself why. How come they are predictable? Can you avoid similar telegraphing?



You don't have to have awesome speed, if you really understand openings. I have seen some very slow martial artists with some very slow techniques who can get in almost every time. What they lack in speed, they make up for in timing and distance.



## Blocks, Punches, and Kicks

So, have you examined what's out there? Does it all look similar? Did you see a lot of blocks, punches, and kicks? Maybe you're doing the **same ol' same ol.**

Are you limited in your technique?

Are you bored with your defense tactics?

If you can slow down a punch or a kick, you can do some pretty interesting moves. **What am I talking about?**



## Wrist Locks

If you are drawing a mind blank, when trying to be different, then you need my book **Wrist Locks: From Protecting Yourself to Becoming an Expert.**

This may sound like a blatant sales pitch (OK, it is), but I'm not kidding.

The book is like no other out there. It will teach you how to invent your own locks. You'll come up with your own sequences that will confuse the **snot** out of your opponent. The chapters on **Feeling Where to Go** and **Counters and Reversals** will speed you on your way to truly responding with different techniques.

For more information on **Wrist Locks: From Protecting Yourself to Becoming an Expert**, ...go to Kerwin Benson Publishing's main page.

<http://www.kerwinbenson.com>

OK, sorry for the small ad, but I really do believe that besides being loaded with different techniques, my book teaches you how to be different to become the best.



## Don't Give Them What They Want

Not giving your opponents what they want is more than just doing the unexpected. **It is doing the unexpected with a purpose.**

Your goal should be to shut your opponents down (like with a wrist lock at the end of a hit and kick sequence or a barrage of hits that makes it impossible for your opponent to respond).

Some people think of shutting someone down in two ways:

\*One way is to complement the opponent's movement. You go with your opponent's motion, and then suddenly you inflict/impose your own countering movement.

\*The other way is to contrast your opponent's movement. You oppose the attacking technique. You punch right across your opponent's punch, thus checking at the same time that you're attacking.

Maybe you respond to a kick with an elbow strike to the leg—you check and strike at the same time. You get the idea.



## Being Well Informed

If you recognize almost everything out there, then you won't be surprised when someone tries to pull something different on you. If you know the other person's pattern, then you'll know how to respond within the pattern.

And if you have been following the advice of this article, you'll know how to surprise your opponent by breaking out of the pattern.

For example, in the book **Wrist Locks: from Protecting Yourself to Becoming an Expert**, there are two complete patterns. Entering at any point in the pattern is excellent for subduing your opponent, but what if your opponent has the book?

Your opponent will know the pattern. What do you do?

**You change the pattern.** Some of the other chapters in the book have taught you how to improvise. Your opponent responds to your counter. You feel where to go; **your counter is flawless.**

This is what makes martial arts interesting.



## The Next Level

Take the martial arts game to the next level. Know how to shut down each move.

Can you wrist lock at any point in a sequence? (Remember, my book gives great advice on this.) How many moves does it take you to shut down an opponent?

How often can you catch your opponent off guard? **Do you now confuse your opponents with your unique responses?** Is everyone now starting to imitate you?

You're doing different maneuvers. Others **are** imitating you. Now, everything is starting to look the same again, except this time the familiarity will stem from the changes that **YOU** made to the martial arts community.

Still got a problem? What do you do? If enough people show interest, I'll post an article on the subject. Until then, good luck in your pursuit of the different!

**Good Luck! And remember, you aren't alone.**

You may e-mail me through this publisher (bookinfo@kerwinbenson.com) with your questions.

Train Well!

Keith Pascal



# Contact Information:

Kerwin Benson Publishing  
2749 Friendly Street, Suite 409  
Eugene, Oregon 97405

Kerwin Benson's Message phone: (541) 342-3915

e-mail: [bookinfo@kerwinbenson.com](mailto:bookinfo@kerwinbenson.com)

e-mail the author: [pascal@kerwinbenson.com](mailto:pascal@kerwinbenson.com)

author's home phone: (541)-686-2442