

Tips for Speedy

**Reactions, Secondary
Hits, Defense
Techniques, and Kicks**

by Keith Pascal

Introduction

When the outside world thinks of martial artists, most of them think of us as having **lightning fast techniques and reflexes**. It's a great stereotype — and I do my part to keep that myth going.

The truth of the matter is the majority of martial artists are pathetically slow. Actual street fighters often leave them in the dust, when it comes to speed of technique, and reaction response.

While this isn't the complete book that I may eventually write on the subject, nor is it the hefty work, **Secrets of Speed Fighting**, by **Dr, John La Tourette**, it does have some unique tips on getting fast. And the methods themselves are speedy. **Often, you will see almost instant improvements.**



The Speed Report is composed of seven articles that I previously wrote on the subject of speed development. These articles have been tightened, in some cases reworked, and new information has been added. There is also a brand new article included in the booklet.

This concept all started with my original article **Speeding Your Reaction Time**, which was published in the **Dragon's List**. I got such a positive

response from that one article, that Kerwin Benson Publishing included it as one of the bonus options with my book **Wrist Locks: From Protecting Yourself to Becoming an Expert**. Boy, was that small report popular ... they're sad to have to retire it. But you can still read it in this e-book.

This booklet **begins** with a reprint of that article. You get to immediately start working on building a super-fast reaction response. **Your attackers punches will seem slow, after you perfect this technique.**

No aggressive movement will catch you off guard. You will become **the ultimate master of speed....** Well, I wouldn't go that far, but it is a pretty cool exercise for building your reaction response.

This booklet is divided into six sections:

1. Developing Lightning Quick Reactions
2. A few Methods for Getting Your Attack Hits In Faster
3. Being Fast in your Defense
4. Getting Faster Kicks Now
5. Keeping Your Speed Once You've Got It
6. More Places to Learn About Speed Development

Don't discount the tips found in these pages. I have already acknowledged that this isn't a complete work. But the tips are valuable. **Often the smaller the tip, the bigger the result.**

If you're the skeptical type, put your skepticism on hold for a few pages. Try these tips. After you practice them for awhile, then judge them with a critical eye. I think you'll be pleasantly surprised.



1

Lightning Quick Reactions

As mentioned in the Introduction, this section begins with A Great Technique for Building Your Quick Reaction Response. This little article has “out-sold” a fifteen-page giant in reader-response popularity.

You also get a discussion on Lightning Quick Reactions. It includes three anecdotes -- fun little stories, some observations on developing a quick-reaction response, and it ends with five useful tips on developing a better reaction response.



Great Technique for Building Your Quick- Reaction Response

by Keith Pascal

(Reprinted with permission from *The Dragon's List*, Dec.'99/Jan.'00)

Your opponent barely starts to move. Before he really initiates an attack, you're all over him (or her). You react to any motion quickly and efficiently — **with almost blinding speed.**

Actually, you don't need to have blinding speed to be perceived as super fast. What you do need is a quick reaction time. Here's a simple exercise to start reducing the time between an initiated attack and your reaction....

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As a martial artist, you already know the benefits of practice. The more you practice the better you get. So let's get you better at reacting to an unpredicted motion. You need to find something (a stimulus) to react to.

Ideally, you would choose to respond to a real opponent in as real a situation as possible — I advise against this at the beginning. Not only because of safety considerations, but **it's too easy to accidentally get into a rhythm** with a practice partner. You might not even be aware that you're reacting to timing rather than a sudden response.

As an alternative to something completely random (you might never get the stimulus needed, or have to wait a very long time just to get to do one practice response), you need something that is semi-random. You want lots to react to; you just don't want to know precisely when it's coming.

Maybe you could use traffic lights. If so, pick the ones that are not on a timer, but still in a busy enough area of town where the sensor will be tripped often. Maybe you could lash out with a punch whenever the light turns red.

Note: If you're in a car, don't do any motion that would compromise your safety. Also, you might get weird looks from pedestrians and other drivers. What would you think if you saw people lash out with punches every time they approached a red light? (I know; you'd assume that they had read this article.)

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Instead of snapping a backfist, you could just snap your fingers, or quietly say the word punch. **Eventually, you'll have to practice your response with something realistic**, like a kick or a punch — that's the only way to really develop the quick reaction that you want. For now, a non-technique response will suffice.



Instead of a traffic light, I use my tv. We have a satellite dish that offers a program guide. Whenever I click on the movie guide, there is a delay.

The receiver has to download the information from the satellite. Anyway, the pause between when I click the remote and when the information scrolls onto the screen varies.

You guessed it — I look at the set out of the corner of my eye...

...And as soon as the screen starts to fill with movies (a distinct motion), I respond with either three blindingly fast punches, or a rapid kick-eye jab combination.



Note: You are looking with the sides of your eyes too, right? After all, motion is perceived there (you don't need a detailed discussion of rods and cones here; you may research the subject later, if you feel the need). Just think of your favorite Bruce Lee pose. If he was at the ready, then he was looking out of the corner of his eye.



I like using the tv, because I can practice this way as much as I want in the privacy of my own home. And I can get in as many practices in a session as I want. The next stimulus is just a click away.



So, **what will you use to produce a semi-random response?** If you brainstorm, I'm sure you'll come up with a ton of ideas —cars coming into your line of sight from your living-room window, a random response on your computer, having someone snap their fingers (if it's random and not rhythmic), fish jumping for insects by a lake or river, etc....

After you get really fast, then it's time to work with a partner. Have your partner initiate an attack. You respond to the motion. Do your best to

avoid slipping into a rhythm. Always work at getting faster and cleaner. It takes practice, but **you will be amazed with your results**. Have fun lessening your reaction time!

Keith Pascal is the author of the book **Wrist Locks: From Protecting Yourself to Becoming an Expert**. You can find out more about this book and read free articles by Keith at Kerwin Benson Publishing's web site at <http://www.kerwinbenson.com> or you may e-mail him through the publishing company at quickresponse@kerwinbenson.com

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Developing “Lightning-Quick” Reactions

Well, you just read the article that I wrote in December of 1999. As you know, it was so well-received, that Kerwin Benson Publishing decided to include it with all orders of my book on Wrist Locks.

Well, that article started me thinking about the instant reactions that martial artists supposedly develop over time. Do I have those types of reactions? Do my readers?



To answer the first question (I am sure you'll write in to answer the second question), I have three little anecdotes to share with you. After my stories, I will give you a few tips on **how to speed up the process of making your reactions automatic and “lightning-quick.”**



1. My Wife Said, “Wow.”

A few days ago, my daughter, almost three yrs. old now, was swinging a big bag of new socks around and around. She was only three or four feet away from me, at the time.

Suddenly, the plastic bag slipped out of her hand and headed for my eyes. I obviously did not have time to react....

Yet, my wife noticed that I had. My head had angled slightly to the side, and a check hand came up to the side of my face. **This all happened without conscious thought.** How was I able to react so quickly to this situation?

Obviously, we don't practice dodging bags of socks in the dojo. In fact, I don't really practice dodging anything, except...

...punches, kicks, swings of a stick or knife. So, while I don't practice dodging items thrown through the air, I guess I do practice angles and checks.

Isn't it nice to know that, at least in one sense, all of these skills generalize a bit. I have practiced angles and checks in so many different contexts, that now I can check lots of things.



2. Glenn, Anne, Bill and Kate at Silver Falls

Every other year, we get the **Steve Golden** crowd together for a martial arts weekend at **Silver Falls** in Oregon. We congregate from Washington, Oregon, and Ohio. And we have a great time.

Anyway, at **Silver Falls**, I noticed some nice reactions in some of my friends (and my wife, Kate, too). We were practicing in the Conference Center.

Glenn Davis, **Anne Zimmerman**, **Bill Shaw**, and **Kate** were all sitting on the sidelines deeply engrossed in their conversations.

There was fighting going on in the center of the room. All of a sudden, one of the people sparring went flying through the air, straight towards my wife and friends....

Almost in unison, their legs flew up to stop the person flying into them. They had all stop-kicked an entire body flying at them.

I noticed this from across the room. **All legs went up in unison.** Amazing.

So, I kept watching. It happened a few more times. Each time, they weren't even looking at the person stumbling into them. They just reacted, and then continued their conversations, without comment. **It didn't even phase them.**

I will definitely start investigating the "how" of this particular phenomenon. Why do these four have this reaction, and some of my students do not? Is it just a matter of time?



3. The Best Kind of Lighting-Quick Reactions

This last example of speedy reactions happened back in the early eighties, before seat-belting was mandatory in Oregon.

I was driving on an overpass. I was raining hard — typical Oregon weather. As we came over the pass, all of a sudden (**all quick-reaction stories have to have an "all of a sudden" in them**) ...

There was a Mercedes stopped on the off ramp —later we found out that he didn't want to drive through the puddle, so the guy just stopped — sheeesh!

I had just enough time to see that I couldn't veer left, because there were other cars. And there was no place to go to the right. No choice, and then **BAM** (as Emeril would say).

My buddy wondered how I survived, since I wasn't wearing a seat-belt. **He saw me flying through the air, my head just inches away from the windshield....** So, what happened?

Later, we figured it out. I had been practicing an exercise from **Wing Chun** called "**Lop-Sao**" for years. In it, you develop a sensitivity, where anytime something brushes near your wrist you snap into a check, called a "**Bong-Sao.**"

After thousands upon thousands of repetitions of this exercise, **the reaction became truly automatic**. Absolutely no thought involved — no visual clues either. In fact, I often practice this exercise with my eyes closed.

So, here's what happened: As I was flying through the air, my wrist hit the steering wheel. Well, that little hit was enough to cause my body to react automatically. That check threw me back into my seat.



Wouldn't it be great if we could get our bodies to defend ourselves, while we thought about why kind of sauce to put on the pasta for dinner? Be on the lookout for exercises that teach you to react by feeling. It's important.



The Tips:

I am by no means done with this subject. It will warrant a lot of further study. To get you going, I offer the following advice:

* **Practice the motions that you want automatic over and over.**

It's going to take a long time to develop super reflexes. You might as well start now.

* **Find good patterns to practice.** You wouldn't want to generalize an upward block to anything coming down from above, for example. Someone swings down on you with a baseball bat.

You block upwards — and break your arm. Ouch.

* **Don't just go through the repetitions.** Make each repetition a good one. Give it conscious effort now, so you don't have to, when the emergency arises —i.e. if you practice sloppy checks, then you will react to the **all-of-suddens** with sloppy checks. Seek precision now.

* **Don't practice dodging thrown tennis balls, if you want to learn to react automatically to punches.** You can start with tennis balls, but make sure you add an equal amount of realism to your practice session.

* **Be patient.** It takes time. If you could develop these reactions over night, then everyone would have them. Persistence and dedication definitely apply to developing lightning-quick reactions. *Now, go practice.*



2

A Few Methods for Getting Your Attack Hits In Faster

You have just examined ways to improve your Reaction Response. Now, it's time to look at a few tactics and techniques for improving your attacks. Specifically, you will improve the speed of your attack. We can get even more specific than that -- you will work on speeding your second hit in your barrage of strikes.

So, rather than focusing on the mechanics of a basic punch, I'll give you some techniques to speed your punches to their targets by changing what happens after your initial attack.



Note: At this point in my writing career, I am not sure I have the ability to make such a topic as basic punches sizzle with interest. Someday ... but not yet.



The Invisible Hit: Your Attacker Thinks You Have **Super Human Speed**

I think it's really really funny, that my students, and several other martial artists, **consider me to be very fast**. The reason that I think it's so funny, is that I don't think of myself as a Speedy Gonzales at all. Far from it.

You see, I am a heavy guy. **I weigh over 270 pounds**, and I am under six feet tall. Not only that, I am minus a joint in each ankle. I walk fine, but I have never been able to run, because of this lack of flexibility. I am 41 years old — working out with young energy-filled adolescents. Fast? Yeah, right.

Yet others do perceive me as being very fast. Why?

Well, one reason is that I take advantage of, what I call, the invisible hit. In my classes with **Steve Golden**, an invisible hit after a trap was referred to as a “third hand.”

Steve Golden taught yet a different invisible hand technique, this past year in Las Vegas, at the **Bruce Lee Memorial Seminar**. He used his opponent's own arm to obstruct the line of vision of the attack. Very clever.

You see, there are a ton of different kinds of attacks and/or defenses, where your opponent is confused as to where a **surprise hit** came from. I call these finesses **invisible hands**.



Let's start with an invisible hand tactic that has a lot of applications. You will be able to use it with lots of techniques.

The idea behind this particular tactic is to **follow up an initial hit with an immediate hit with the same hand**. That's right, **the same hand**. The follow-up strike **starts from a shorter distance**. It comes in fast.



Let me illustrate:

You are facing your opponent. Suddenly there is an opening. You strike with a vertical punch to your attacker's face. Normally, at this point, the next move might be to cock your hand back to deliver another blow, or you might come in immediately with your other fist.

What I am suggesting is to **strike again using the same hand, immediately after making contact**. **And I do mean immediately**.

You punch. Your opponent's head flies back, and you follow forward with a strike with the same hand...maybe another punch. Maybe you open your hand and palm strike to the nose. Your choice.

Don't write to me complaining about not being able to get any power with that second strike. There are a lot of people out there who can generate more than enough power from just an inch or two. Think of Bruce Lee's One Inch Punch. How about Wing Chun? Or the students in Steve Golden's Class...



Note: By the way, in his class we used to practice this technique coming off of an eye jab. And yes, we got lots of power — more than enough to do damage.

The feeling of the second strike was different. The jab got a quicker response, in practice, of the head flying back. You had to jump on that second move.



Getting power from very short distances is a skill in and of itself. It definitely would merit a full article, if not an entire book (there are several already out on the market).

See what you can do with the above tactic. What are other ways that you might follow up immediately with the same hand?

Remember, when you follow up with the same hand, and you don't telegraph your second hit, **you will confuse your opponent**. Attackers just can't seem to figure out where that speedy, invisible hit is coming from. **Amazing.**



A Back Fist by Any Other Name...

...is still a great follow-up for an initial strike. This is a way to use the Invisible Hand Technique off of a jab, instead of a power punch, or even the eye jab. It's a variation on this great tactic:

Practice a jab, or any other strike, if you don't jab well, to your opponent's cheek. You want a left punch to a right cheek, or a right jab to the left cheek. In other words, **no backhand movements on the first strike.**

Most of my jabs go straight out and straight back. In this case, you want your jab to be just a touch sloppy. It jabs out, and as it makes contact with the cheek, it punches through and across the center off your body a bit. In other words, **you jab at one cheek, and punch through to the other side.**

This puts you in the perfect position to back fist (some systems call it a "back knuckle") your opponent's other cheek. **It's a fast little smack.** But remember, those short smacks can pack a lot of power behind them.

**Don't blow it. Don't blow it. Don't blow it. Don't blow it. Don't blow it.
Don't blow it. Don't blow it. Don't blow it. Don't blow it.**

You just finished your first strike, the jab. You are about to follow with your back hand. **Don't cock your hand back.** Please, I implore you, don't do it! **Don't take the speed away from this fast technique.**

In fact, maybe you should practice punching the air, leaving an extended punch out for just a second, and then going straight into your back fist. Practice, until it's smooth and fast.



Words To Guide Us Towards Super Speed

Those of you who read the e-zine **Martial Arts Mastery: A Tell-All of Tips, Tactics, and Techniques**, know that I have a weekly section on quotes.

I choose some quote relevant to the topic of that week's feature article. I thought you might like some words of **Bruce Lee** on the subject of speed. I hope they help.



In Bruce Lee's original book **The Tao of Jeet Kune Do**, he said:

“Many fighters fail to appreciate how much true speed depends on **economy of motion** (ie. good form and good coordination).” page 57

In the above article I am trying to get you faster by utilizing this principle. By immediate striking on your second hit from a very close range,

you are truly achieving an economy of motion. This perceived speed goes down the toilet, if you telegraph by cocking your hand even slightly. Don't do it.



Bruce Lee also said:

“Overall tension and unnecessary muscular contractions act as brakes, reducing speed and dissipating energy.”

This is very good news. Think about it. You are loose as you initiate your first strike. You contract the instant before impact. As your hand follows up a bit (only a few inches) after the punch, **it almost naturally relaxes.**

This is perfect. Your muscles are in the right state to come in with a speedy secondary strike. **Practice. You'll see how fast you can get.**



Even More Tips On The Invisible Hit

Within a week after I wrote the article on **The Invisible Hit**, I got the following question in the mail. I thought that I explained the principle of gaining power without telegraphing quite well in the article. Apparently not—this reader wasn't the only one who eventually wrote in.

Here is **Mike Russell's** original question, and my response. It attacks the “problem” from a slightly different angle. I hope it helps you add power, without losing any speed:



Reader's Question RE: The Invisible Hand article

Mike Russell wrote in:

I'm confused on a fundamental of your invisible hand strike idea. If a good punch calls for full extension (maybe that's where my confusion lies) how does one put any more force/range of motion into a second punch?

Unless you either move your entire body to move your fully extended arm forward to hit again, or you pull the hand back in order to strike again. I especially don't see how you could jab at the cheek and immediately follow with a back hand.

Good question(s) Mike. And here's a multi-part answer:

*By The Way — A good “vertical” punch calls for full extension. There are other types of punches. This technique is not punch specific. Experiment with different kinds of punches. But yes, it does work, even when you fully extend.

* Extend your hand all the way out in a vertical punch. Is it completely extended? Humor me. Good. Now, **with your fist extended, could you open your hand and strike palm-downward about eight inches?** Could you get any force? **No cocking back allowed.**

Now, imagine that you just struck your attacker in the face. His head flies back/down about eight inches, or so, from your initial strike. Now, **can you see how easy it would be to quickly follow with a palm strike downward to the new position of the face?**

*Also, when I punch, even though I am punching “through” my target, my hand tends to “relax” backwards about an inch after it punches through.

Now Mike, I happen to know that you have a decent one-inch punch, **a la Bruce Lee**. Whether it's your opponent's head that moves, or your hand relaxes back, you should be able to get the power from that small distance.

*When “planning” on using this tactic with a back-fist as your secondary punch, start with jabs that punch slightly “across” your opponent's face. A right jab would contact your attacker's left cheek, and a left would contact the right.

Traditionally jabs go in and out. **On one of your jabs, it goes in, but not out.** It punches slightly across. **It recoils a bit.** From there, it should be no problem to snap back and tag the other cheek. Play with it. **You don't cock your hand, because it is already in the proper position.**

*My last point. Remember, a "one-inch" punch is just the name behind the principle. You use it with a 5-inch punch, a 4-inch punch, etc. **And you use it with a punch that starts from touching.** Learn to generate real power, not just a push, from touching. It can be done.



3

Super Speed, or a Discussion of Angles, Blocking, and Centerline Theory?

In the last chapter, we discussed the Invisible Hit. With it, you demonstrated to your attacker, your “**super-human speed.**” Let’s further convince your opponent of your blinding speed. This time, we will approach the task from a defensive, rather than offensive point of view.

I could save a lot of time (and so could you — chuckle chuckle), if I could get you to stop blocking completely. **Blocking is an extra movement.** And extra moves take more time.



Bruce Lee really was incredibly fast, faster than most could really imagine. But seemed even faster, because he practiced what he preached....

For the most part, **he did not block**. For him, **blocking was too slow and inefficient**. He gave us a major clue as to how important he thought this principle was — he named his system **Jeet Kune Do**. In English, that's "The Way of the Intercepting Fist."

His system isn't called "**The Way of Block, Then Punch**." Your first move is an offensive tactic. You intercept with an attack of your own.

Now, I don't for a minute think that I am going to get my Blockers, and you know who you are, to stop blocking, based on a few paragraphs written by a guy out there in cyberspace (yours truly).



Or are you that easily swayed?

If you have studied a style that blocks, and blocking works for you, great. I mean that. Just realize that some of us avoid blocking, in the hope of gaining speed — by taking the shorter route.

I "would" like to convince you Blockers of **the benefits of shorter blocks, with tighter angles**. Although not as efficient as doing away with blocking altogether, you will still gain some significant speed.

(Plus you'll get an added bonus: But you'll just have to read to the end of this article to find out about it.)

Anyway, you can see how you'd be faster: **A shorter motion means that you have less distance to travel with the block**. And with less distance, you get there faster, right?

So, what do I mean by **shorter distance** and **a tighter block**? I mean not blocking beyond where it's necessary to defend your body. In other words, **don't block/check more than an inch beyond the part of your body** — trunk, arm, or leg, **that you are defending**.

That applies to your head too. There is no reason to block more than an inch (or two?) past your cheek or ear, on either side of your face. And it doesn't matter which hand you're using to block; the rule still applies.

Of course there are exceptions to every rule.

One that I can think of right off the bat is a check/block that immediately snakes around, in order to catch and hold your opponent's kicking leg.

Example: Your attacker throws a roundhouse kick to your midsection. You respond with a low outer block (or a low **bong sao**, in **Wing Chun**). Your other hand is either striking at your opponent as you block (never forget the principles of **Bruce Lee**), or it is covering your upper gate with a higher block (**tan sao**). As the kick comes in, you block low, and swing that block around and up into a cradle. You catch your attacker's leg or foot in the crook of your arm, between your forearm and biceps.

So, there are exceptions to the rule. A strong, damaging block is **NOT** one of those exceptions. Attempting a "power block" on someone with good "energy" is not the smartest idea....



Bonus Tactic

First, let's understand the problem. Then we can turn it onto a bonafide tactic. **The problem arises when you try to solidly block something that isn't solid.**

In my classes, sometimes I get the point across with a piece of paper. I hold a sheet of paper **with both hands, stretched tightly in front of a student**. I then tell the student to punch/strike the paper hard. The paper rips, easily torn apart.

Next, I tell the student that I am going to **throw a sheet of paper into the air**. The request is to strike it with a lot of force, as it falls to the ground. I tell the student to try to rip it again. This time, it's not so easy. The paper moves with the punch.



You might encounter a similar difficulty, if you try to block someone with soft energy. What's worse, **if this opponent knows to come back on your centerline, you could be in a "World of Hurt."**

It's as though your opponent's arm **rubber-bands** (wet noodles?) right back to your body. No matter what you do, your attacker's hands come back to haunt you.



So, your new tactic might be to verify your opponent's energy. **Offer a non-committed punch** — one that won't get you in trouble. It doesn't make contact with the target, for you to get useful information.

If you get a hard block response, you might have more room to "play." On the other hand, if you get a **"wet noodle"** response, you now know that, in this instance, a power block will not be your technique of choice.



Another Round of Martial Arts Quotes

When you read "martial arts," don't immediately discount moves or principles not found in your style. Even if you don't choose to follow the advice from my above article, you can still use it to improve your martial arts.

This past week, I was re-reading my old, worn copy of **"Secrets of Speed Fighting"** by **John La Tourette, Ph.D.**

While I think that it's an extremely difficult book to follow, I do think that it is filled with useful information. La Tourrette definitely knows his stuff. It's just that the format and/or maybe the organization is a bit rough for me. Still, it definitely gives me principles to ponder.



Anyway, the next time you reread this chapter, keep the following in mind:

“1. You, as a speed fighter, must understand your own weaknesses and your own fighting strengths.”

“2. You must understand the opponent's weaknesses and strengths.”

(page 163)



Also, La Tourrette complements Bruce Lee's theory, when he says:

“Action Is Faster Than Reaction!”

(page 111)



4

Get Faster Kicks Now!

Just how fast can you kick? **From the proper distance, does it get in most of the time?** If it does, then you probably don't need this article.

My definition of fast, is if it does the job. For me, **the purpose of fast is to be more effective.** Nothing more.

I have chosen a topic that entire books have been written about. There are a ton of books on how to kick. Improving your kicks has been a hot topic in the past. Unfortunately, not a lot of them give practical advice for improving the speed of your kicks.

So, to get you to speed up your kicks, with the space constraints of this article, and the time limitation of straining your eyes on a computer

monitor (if you don't have a printed out version), I offer you three pieces of advice.

If you follow just one of these tactics, your kicking speed will improve. By how much depends on how much improvement needs to be made.

Unfortunately, the faster you already are, the less noticeable the results. Sorry, **it's the law of diminishing returns.**



Tactic One:

My teacher, **Steve Golden**, has barked (I hope he doesn't take offense at the term) at his students for years, "**To get your kick out there faster, concentrate on getting it back faster.**"

This works well for all kinds of snap kicks. It's good advice. Try it. **Don't dismiss it, until you've tried it....**

Get up and do a snap front kick, at about groin level. Just do your regular, old snap front kick, OK?

Now, do the same kick, but **try to get it back down to the ground as fast as possible.** Replace it faster. Even Faster.

You should see almost **instant results.** Did you?



Tactic Two:

Bill Shaw has a great Video Series on the martial arts. He is a true expert in the arts (leaves me in the dust).

I want to quote one of his videos, but I am not sure which one. **He has 21 of them.** Anyway, since our remodel last month, our videos are packed away, so I am not sure exactly which one it is.

I don't think it was from **Devastation Kicking**, **Secrets of Deceptive Kicks**, or **Advanced Deceptive Kicks**. It was probably from **Best Fighting Kicks** or **Advanced Fighting Kicks**.

Sorry, Mr. Shaw — I'll just have to paraphrase you, this time.



Anyway, he talks about “**rounding the corners**” on your kicks. Here's what he means. Let's take a side kick as an example:

A lot of styles break this kick into two motions. **Even when they say that they don't, they do.**

The first motion raises the kick to about knee level. The second motion throws the kick out towards the opponent. Some martial artists claim that it's only one motion, because the foot never stops — it is in constant motion.

I say that it's two motions, because of the change of direction. That point where it changes direction is the “**corner.**”

Bill Shaw's advice is to **start rounding that sharp edge**, that corner. Could you start heading a bit earlier towards your opponent — before the kick has reached its apex (top point, next to your planted knee)?

Really, **you only need to be able to clear your opponent's leg**, which could be obstructing your path. **Any extra motion is wasted, and it slows your kick down.** So round, and then round some more. Get rid of that wasted motion.

And speaking of extra motions....



Tactic Three:

Back to Bruce Lee, by way of Steve Golden, again.

Let's continue talking about the side kick. **Bruce Lee** believed in economy of motion, and **Steve Golden** believes in economy of motion.

And so, yep, you guessed it — I have seen the “**economy of motion light**” too.

Don't tell anyone, but **Bill Shaw** understands the principle too. It's the ever-present goal of trying to get rid of **ALL** unnecessary movement — especially movement that isn't heading toward the target.

Draw a straight line from your kicking foot, while it's still on the ground, to the point that you want to make contact on your attacker. As an example, I have seen **Steve Golden** use a staff, a broom, or a chair to better show the line from foot to the attacker.

One end of the staff starts at your foot, and the other end might end at your opponent's midsection.

That foot goes straight up the line to the attacker. That does **NOT** mean straight-legged. The knee has to bend and flex to follow the line.

Anyway, **it's the ultimate form of rounding corners**, because there are no real corners left to round. And it's fast. Surprisingly so. And yes, I can still get the power that I need.

So, which will it be? Are you going to try faster replacements, round corners, or the “Bruce Lee Sidekick”? Any of them, will make you a faster kicker. **Good kicking.**



5

The Art of Keeping Your Speed Once You've Got It

Once you achieve some degree of speedy reactions and techniques, don't lose it. One way of losing it is by not practicing. You need to maintain your techniques.

I have found that when I am rusty, my fluidity of motion is the first to go. With the loss of smooth technique, I lose a fair bit of speed. So, my first piece of advice in this chapter is ...

...practice to maintain speed.



Don't Over Practice

So, naturally, my second piece of advice is not to practice too much. Think of your back fist like a stroke in tennis. Have you ever heard of **Tennis Elbow**?

Well, I think they should rename it to maybe **Karate Elbow**, or maybe even **Gung Fu Elbow**. Even with the proper technique — correct position for a vertical punch, and not completely extending for a horizontal punch, **you could still injure yourself by over-training.**

I try not to train the same muscle involved in the speed movement any two days in a row. It's the concept borrowed from my weight-lifting class in high school. We worked arms one day, and legs the next. This gave the muscles a chance to repair.

You should also learn to get in tune with your body's needs. **Your body probably hints when it needs a rest** all of the time. The question is, do you know how to listen?



Watch The Pros

One way to stay fresh, is to get energized by watching someone better than you. **It should inspire, rather than depress.** Glean what you can.

Use it to hone your technique. If you lose some aspect of your speed responses as you get older, maybe you can learn new skills and techniques. Your speed will take on a new quality.

Note: I have seen men in their 70s who are still a lot faster than martial artists in their prime. Some of the Bruce Lee students play a form of hot hands with martial artists in their 20s, 30s, and 40s.

They try to touch the younger martial artist on the chest. The younger athletes try to block with either or both hands. If the block touches the 70-year old's hand or arm, it is considered blocked.

I have seen Dan Lee go around the whole room — he beat all of the attendees with his speed. You don't have to lose certain aspects of your martial ability as you get older.

Do the Proper Conditioning

- Heavy weights with a low number of repetitions builds muscle mass. A lot of times, this produces shorter bulkier muscles. This can occur from not extending the rep. all the way out.
- (Read books on body building, before you try anything. Maybe get some coaching. Don't hurt yourself.)
- Read **Bruce Lee: The Art of Expressing the Human Body**, edited by **John Little** (Tuttle Publishing). If you want muscles like Bruce Lee's, you need to do his type of workout. That makes sense, right?



Learn Muscle Theory

I don't want to get technical here. So, my tip is for you to **find out about slow and fast-twitch muscles**. It's important.

Important enough, that someday, I may do an article on it in my e-zine. Look for it, if you subscribe. Enough said.



Keep Learning

You can start with the **Resource Section** of this book. Stay fresh. Don't just always do the **same 'ol same 'ol**. Look for ways to energize your class.

Note: Small plug. At the end of March, 2001, I will have a new e-package available. The subject of the package is **Teaching Martial Arts More Effectively**. Anyway, one of the bonus reports is on the subject of ways to energize your class. If you aren't a martial arts teacher, maybe you could borrow a copy from your teacher. Of course, first you have to get him/her to order it, right?



My favorite form of learning is to read books and articles. I think it's great to have an extensive martial arts library.

For some, a video library is important too. Even though I prefer to learn from books, I also have an extensive video library. It provides a different way for the brain to process the information.

You should also keep notes — either in a notebook, on cassette, or even with a camcorder on video. (We can also take notes, and keep files on our trusty computers too.)

You can also keep your speed by going to seminars. Martial Arts should involve a life-long goal to improve.



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6

Resources

Economy of Motion

If you are interested in improving your speed by focusing on economy of motion, may I suggest that you pursue information on [Jeet Kune Do](#).

If you have Internet access, then first head to [Sean Madigan's Site](#):

<http://www.junfanjkd.com>

You should find more than enough informatin to get you started.



Next, head to the Site put up by the [Bruce Lee Educational Foundation](#):

<http://www.jkd.com>



And of course, if you want an e-zine with the **Jeet Kune Do** flavor sign up for:

Martial Arts Mastery: A tell-All of tips, Tactics, and techniques

Send an email now to:

martialartsmastery-subscribe@listbot.com



Books On developing Martial Arts Speed

Of course, you should start your collection with an on-line search. I just went to **Amazon.com**. There were six listings for books on martial arts speed.

One not listed, that I think you ought to have in your collection is:

Secrets of Speed Fighting : Methods of the Masters, by **Dr. John La Tourette**.

If you can't find it on-line, and if you don't see it advertised in your monthly martial arts magazine, I believe you can still order it from:

The American Sports Training Institute
6252 Dark Hollow Road
Medford, Oregon 97501



Web Martial Arts

If you want to read some articles on martial arts, and want to get in touch with someone who has his keyboard linked to the pulse of **Internet Martial Arts**, then you should check out [Rick Kirkham's site](#).

He's into Martial Arts, Tutoring, e-books, and Videos. Quite a line up. Take a look :

<http://tutor.hypermart.net>



Martial Arts Business On-line

Have you ever thought about setting up any sort of **Martial Arts Business on the Net**? Or do you have a web site that just isn't getting the traffic, that you'd like?

If you answered yes to either of these questions, then you need to meet [Randy LaHaie](#). His Site has what you need:

<http://www.selfdefensebiz.com/>



Find Out More About Keith Pascal

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