

Techniques Take Time 2

But techniques take time. Developing attributes can be done as certain techniques are drilled time and time again, but the more one concentrates on getting a technique done correctly, the more he will have to slow down and work on form. The more he works on form, the less time will be devoted to speed and timing.

Ironically, the fact that techniques take time to learn and master may be the only approach we have to merging the idea of creating a repertoire of *waza* and also developing the skills to apply those *waza*.

Consider a karate or ju-jutsu exam. The attacking partner attacks from a predetermined distance with a predetermined attack (or at least an attack somewhat limited in variety). The defending partner shows her stuff by keeping good form while moving quickly, decisively and in a manner that would, if actually applied, take the opponent out of the combat. Great! Now ask yourself to what extent these examinees had to practice *with each other* to perform well. Would they have done as well if they had not trained with their own dojo mates?

But they *had* to train together! How else would they have learned to improve their timing, speed (attributes) and the quality of their technique? No one can train by constantly being surprised by a mad Mongolian warrior stoked on uppers one day and a Maori weight lifter with a nasty attitude the next.

So only *artificial* experiences (and that is what training is, after all) can prepare one for an unexpected, unique, unpracticed-for *reality*. Because practice must be artificial, safe, and work on only certain aspects at a time, mastering the use of any technique can actually take much longer than we think. Let's consider something simple like a punch to the face. It takes relatively little training to use a face-punch in a real situation. You would have to know how to make a solid fist (but not so solid as to impair arm movement), how to keep the wrist straight, how not to float the elbow (or how *to* float the elbow if you are delivering a hook), how to best transfer energy, and what stance would optimize your delivery. You would practice this solo, the perhaps on a heavy bag or *makiwara*. You would practice it against a partner without making contact. It might be just months, perhaps only weeks before you have a truly respectable face punch.

Fast forward to a street situation in which Slimy McSlugfest has not only insulted your date for the evening, but also shoved her against a parking meter in order to get to you. Should you take care of Ms. Right first? Should you hit him before he reaches you? Should you fake a backfist? Should you lunge or reverse punch? Should you aim for his nose, eye, jaw, throat, or the head in general, in hopes that you'll hit something that will cause him enough pain to stop his advancing. What will be your follow-up, if needed? Or should you plan to follow up even if the

first punch knocks him down? And how will that sit with a jury if you send the guy to the local paramedics?

So, I ask you, the seasoned martial artist: how do you put all these factors into a practice session? The only answer is that the sessions must be variable in their content and, since other techniques need training as well, will be repeated over a long training career. Even then, no training career, no training program, no martial style or art will be able to cover all the variations, combinations, and considerations.

If techniques take time to master, think how long a style takes to master—or an entire martial art.