

How to teach Ground Self-defence to 1st Degree Black Belts.

By Debbie Hart

Introduction

Self-defence is possibly one of my favorite parts of Taekwon-Do. Therefore when it came to learning the Ground stuff it was only natural I was going to (eventually) enjoy it. It is also a great way to get a quick fitness workout and build the core and neck muscles! (All that holding your head up can get tiring!) Massive thanks needs to go to **Master Steve Pellow** for all his work over many years in throwing me around and building the strength, especially in my wrists from all the locks, and conditioning - from all the hits!! And for showing me how something should feel, and how to pass that on to others. Likewise, to **Master Paul McPhail** for his guidance and constantly expecting more, sharpening up all the technical bits and always encouraging me to become a better all-round Taekwon-Do practitioner and person.

The content of this thesis comes from my interpretation of the teachings of these two inspirational Masters.

Like any self-defence the physical response is for when you have been unable to AVOID or DE-ESCALATE the situation as taught in our new self-defense syllabus. The ground is the last place you want to be in a real life attack. There are many reasons for this, which we will look into throughout this thesis. As with any situation where you have needed to use your self-defense there is the RECOVERY to deal with also – whether it is the family, police, friends, etc.

I started Taekwon-Do in 2003 and graded to 1st Dan in 2007. This is when I first started to experiment with Ground Self Defense. Everything I had seen up to this point was essentially the “attacker” and the “victim” both starting from a pre-planned position on the ground or a chair and had to work out a “routine” as to what was going to happen. Ground Self Defense was done basically from a static position. Sometimes both opponents would be sitting either side by side or facing each other, or lying down, or a combination of these scenarios - however, it was pre-arranged. It was around this time that the Ground Self-defense in Taekwon-Do changed to non-prearranged. This made it more realistic and better for the student to be able to feel some realism and urgency in their techniques to better prepare for the “real world”.

Objective of this thesis

The objective of this thesis is to make it easier for instructors to teach non-prearranged Ground Self-defense to their 1st Dan students. To prepare them for grading and also understanding the downfalls of what can happen if they find themselves on the ground in a real situation.

The assumption throughout this document is that there is only one attacker and they have no weapons other than themselves – in reality this may not be the case.

What are the examiners looking for? *(As discussed with Master McPhail September 2014)*

- Defending and countering while on the ground.
- You need to stand up as soon as the opportunity allows so you can demonstrate the ability to get away.
- Use a variety of defenses and counter attacks to show a broad knowledge of ground techniques, using both hand and foot techniques.
- Don't overdo it! Once your opponent is down and you have done enough to get away safely, leave. Remember: This is **self-defence**.

The Examiners will likely at some stage, want to see 'pad work' on the ground to demonstrate your ability to move efficiently and effectively and produce accurate foot and hand techniques with power.

Understanding New Zealand Law

When it comes to self-defence, we as martial artist's are also governed by laws of the country just as any citizen. Section 48 of the Crimes Act 1961 states:

"Self-defence and defence of another"

"Everyone is justified in using, in the defence of himself or herself or another, such force as, in the circumstances as he or she believes them to be, it is reasonable to use"

The key here is **REASONABLE** force.

It can get a little murky in terms of what constitutes reasonable force and how it is interpreted. Unfortunately there is no set scale as to what defines reasonable force and what it isn't – this will depend entirely on the circumstances at hand.

What is Ground Self Defence?

It is self defense in the unfortunate situation of having to defend yourself from the ground - whether it started there or you tripped, fell or were pushed or grabbed.

Advantages and Disadvantages of ground self defense:

Advantages:

- Not many! But if you have at least trained for it you will be more prepared for the situation - I guess you won't have far to fall either!

Disadvantages:

- Like being pinned against a wall but your attacker may be on top of you with all their weight.
- You are unable to run until you can stand up.
- Your legs may be very heavy and not able to move.
- The ground surface - Is it tar seal, grass, gravel? Are there potholes or a curb? What other objects are surrounding you?

Objective of ground self-defense

To get up as quickly and as practically as possible – this needs to be emphasized. You need to show you can get away from your attacker to get help (for you and possibly them if they have been immobilized).

In general, as with Self-defence (on your feet) you will need to be aware of the different ranges and what will be effective from the distance you create. You will need to adapt your kicks and hand techniques to attack lower targets and vital spots like the ankle, shin, thigh and groin. You will be doing all the attacks from a different angle as you are now on the ground, so you need to practice.

It takes about nine hours of concentrated time on ground self defence to be able to move and defend effectively.

For instance if you were to train for 15 minutes in class once a week, it would take about three months to become comfortable with moving and counter attacking confidently and effectively. Remember that at the grading, you will be on the floor for about one and a half minutes and it will possibly be at the end of the first day when you are already tired.

How generating power from the ground - is similar to standing

Reaction Force - The attacker has all their weight available to come down at the opponent on the ground. You need to direct that power somewhere else.

Concentration – Using the appropriate tool to concentrate the power generated by the bigger muscles to target the opponent's vital spots.

Equilibrium – Balance is vitally important; you need to work out where your center of gravity is while you are in different positions on the ground.

Speed – Force equals Mass x Speed. Practicing moving on the ground will help with creating speed.

Breath Control – Breathing affects both speed and stamina, one breath for each movement. You may be surprised at how quickly you tire on the ground.

Mass – Using all your body weight and speed to execute a devastating blow.

So where do we start? Well, the basics!

Getting to the Ground:

You can push, grab, trip or do anything really to get your partner to the ground. Make it look real – maybe not feel real!

Getting up safely: Here are two ways you can use to stand up quickly and easily.

Option One: Using one hand and one foot as an anchor, one hand should be held up in the passive position and pull your front leg through and under you and stand up.

See picture below.



By having your hand up in a passive position helps to keep your head up to see any dangers and also creates a barrier and a perceived distance between you and your attacker.

Common problems: Students don't make the triangle between their two feet and anchor hand big enough; it's harder when there isn't enough room for your foot to move through.

You may want to practice standing up like this regularly to get your legs used to it!

Option Two: Roll out of it, over your opposite shoulder, like a backward roll but not over your head. If you are in motion, it's easier to stand up after the roll, so you can bring your hands up. This is a good way to create some real distance. See picture below.



Common problems: This needs to be quick or your attacker may be on top of you before you have time to stand.

Moving while on the ground:

You need to be able to move quickly and confidently on the ground.

Start from your ready position – on your side so you are not full facing. See picture on the left below.

- You can use your hand or arm to anchor or stabilize your body.
- When moving around on the floor, it is important to use your hips by pivoting on them.
- Avoid lying flat on your back or “crabbing” on your hands and feet. You will therefore use less energy and be in better a position.
- Use your body to help balance and to help create power. Don't let your body be a dead weight. Use the motion of your body to your advantage.
- You can also roll on your stomach and turn over, but make it fast and come back to your ready position. This is called *Ground Dodging*.

You can do this as an exercise on your own with no obstacles to get used to moving. It's a great fitness exercise!!



Using Props:

Use a long stick / broomstick (with no head) or something similar as a tool to learn how to move. Place one end of the long stick alongside the partner on the ground, the partner on the ground needs to move away or around the stick while keeping good balance and awareness of what is going on around them. The stick holder will move the stick in different directions around the partner on the ground – whilst leaving one end of the stick on the floor at all times. The direction of the stick movement should be random and from all directions.

This takes away some of the panic of a partner walking into them immediately.

After you're comfortable moving around on the floor, take away the stick. Your partner should step slowly into the opponent on the ground who will need to move and not get stepped on. They should also be aware of what direction they need to move in.

Always keep your eyes up so you can see the person who is attacking and also any other potential hazards. Go slow and be creative.

You need to be able to move, before you can block and sweep or counter attack.

Moving and the initial contact:

Work in cooperation with your partner!

It doesn't matter if you are attacking or if you are the person on the ground. Both partners can be looking for the best option available. Whoever is standing may be able to feel their balance going a particular way, if they let their partner know it will help in learning how the body falls.

Before the counter attacks, learn how the body moves so your partner doesn't land on you. The objective here is to break the attackers balance.

Examples to help with this are:

With one partner on the ground, the attacker steps in with a "walking stance". Try pushing the inner thigh, just above the knee, to see where the body bends and falls.



Then try pushing the outside of the thigh, just above the knee, to see the body move in a different direction.



Try stopping the attacker from moving forward by performing a pressing kick to just below the knee. Be careful with this, in practice, as the knee can be very unforgiving if pushed in a direction it doesn't want to go and can do awful damage if you do not take care. We want and need our partners to keep coming back for more!



Attacker steps in with a stamping motion (slowly) towards the partner on the ground. See how many ways you can find to avoid getting stamped on by moving yourself or re-directing the foot or leg.

Without countering at first, try pushing on the attackers leg with your hands or your feet to see how you can stop or redirect them.

Then try to sweep the foot in the direction it was already going in to over-stretch the attacker so they lose balance. This needs to be done before the foot hits the ground, otherwise all the weight of the attacker has already landed and the advantage has been lost. If you miss the opportunity then stop and re-try, you don't want to get into a power struggle. Try it again and again until it works for you.

You can sweep the leg away with your leg or your hand/ arm or both. This will create a totally different set of possible moves to offset the attackers balance.

Trapping

Breaking your opponents balance by trapping the foot takes a lot of practice. Start by having one partner in a walking stance, the partner on the ground put one foot on the inside of the ankle and the other foot (or hand) just below the outside knee joint of the same leg. If you push (below the knee) and pull (the ankle) at the same time the balance of the partner standing breaks. **Watch where they fall!** If you now switch to the outside of the ankle and the inside of just below knee joint, your partner will lose balance and fall in a different direction. Try this from different angles.

In each of the scenario's you need to make yourself aware of the way the body will move once the balance has been taken from the attacker. This is so you know where not to be when they do fall!

Don't forget you have hands to use too. As the attacker comes in with a low kick or a stomping motion you can use your hand or foot to re-direct the foot. This moves it off target and also breaks their balance.

Now add in the counter attacks:

Once you can confidently move, start putting in the counter attacks. This needs to be dynamic, not static. After each set of moves that work, stand up and re-set.

Ground Techniques:

Techniques performed with either the hands or the feet while they are lying down are called "ground foot techniques" or "ground hand techniques". Like with all Taekwon-Do techniques they are divided into either Attack or Defence techniques. Foot techniques used on the ground are usually at a close range.

Common foot / leg techniques:

Ground Side Piercing Kick

Ground Side Thrusting kick (*same action as the Side Piercing kick but using the ball of the foot*)

Ground Downward Kick (*mainly using the back heel although you can use the ball of the foot*)

Ground Turning Kick

Ground Vertical Kick

Ground Twisting Kick (*Using mainly the ball of the foot or the toes if you're wearing shoes*)

Ground Checking Kick

Ground Crescent Kick

Ground Hooking Kick

Ground Smashing Kick

Knee Bending

Leg Crossing

Common Hand techniques:

Checking (with an X-Fist, X-Knife-hand, Straight Forearm or Straight Knifehand)

Covering (with alternate back hand, alternate Forearm, parallel back hand)

Ground Punch

Ground Middle Knuckle Fist / Ground Vertical Punch (Both of these using two hands)

Ground Downward Strike (Using the back fist, back hand, side fist or knife-hand)

Ground Thrust (Using mainly the Flat fingertip, double finger and thumb)

Ground Cross-Cut (Inward or Outward using the flat fingertip)

“Closest weapon to closest target.” Basically, use anything you can to take your attackers balance and disable or create enough distance between you and your attacker to allow you to get up safely and get away.

Make it simple! It doesn't need to look pretty but it will need to be effective. Follow up until your attacker is no longer a danger, get up and move away keeping a good watch on what is going on around you, keeping your hands up.

Once you get a bit more comfortable with moving try using your body to re-direct their balance. You can use your knees by rolling into the legs of the standing partner at an angle to break their balance. You can use your shoulders to offset an attack that is close enough.

BE NICE TO YOUR TRAINING PARTNERS

It is very easy to get carried away and go too fast too soon. Keep it slow and stop often to see what the next move could be. You may be surprised at how many things you can find when you look. Don't complicate it – keep it simple and it will start to flow with a little bit of time and practice.

Once you are comfortable with a single partner try adding multiple partners. You do this with two attackers and they come in **one at a time** to the opponent on the ground with kicks, punches, grabs etc. and from continually changing directions. It is vital the attackers come in **slowly** and continuously. The objective of this exercise is to make the opponent on the ground move freely and quickly – being able to change direction instantly. It is also to allow them to see their target visually, similar to two on one sparring.

The opponent on the ground will naturally speed up their movements as they gain confidence. It is up to the attackers to keep the speed of the drill slow. It is common that it will feel too slow for the attackers BUT the opponent on the floor will likely go into “panic mode” and automatically speed things up. You need to trust your partners to help form the moves naturally.

This will make it much easier when you go back to one.

Pad work!!

A great way to see how the techniques work is to have someone holding an air shield and actually doing each of the kicks on the pad. You can use your hand or arm to anchor or stabilize your body by pushing into the floor as you kick.

This can and does happen at grading's. This is the same as the general pad work we would do in our fitness test. But it is using ground techniques. This is a great work out for fitness as well as helping to encourage movement and getting the body position quickly into the position it needs to be for optimum speed and power. It will help to see how powerful the ground techniques can be without actually injuring your partner.

In conclusion

Some of the things in this thesis you may say “why should we do that – it not going work in real life”. This is true – rolling round on the ground! That’s not going to save you, but it will enable you to know and create opportunities so you can defend and counter while on the ground. You will be able to get up *safely, efficiently, effectively* and *quickly*. You need to crawl before you walk and walk before you run – just like a beginner who is first starting to learn Taekwon-Do. It is about getting the basics right first. If you spend the time on the basics the rest will fall into place. At 1st Degree Black belt you have many techniques that are well practiced and available to use. This is just about adapting them to work from a different position and situation.

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