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BEATING VIOLENCE

HOW TO STAY SAFE - A GUIDE FOR MEN AND WOMEN

JAMES R SHAW

Beating Violence

How to stay safe - a guide for men and women

James R Shaw

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*To my wonderful wife Tara; thank you for loving me and keeping
me honest.*

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About the Sample

Hi!

Thank you for stopping by and for your support.

This sample contains just a couple of random chapters, I hope you enjoy them.

Don't hesitate to offer any feedback, no matter how "honest"!

My email address is james.shaw@gmail.com or you can visit the facebook page at www.facebook.com/BeatingViolence¹

All the best,
James

¹<http://www.facebook.com/BeatingViolence>

Part 2 - Preparation Before The Attack

Self-Defense Training and Martial Arts

“Martial Arts” means many different things to different people, but if you think that going to a class at the local YMCA will turn you into Bruce Lee or Chuck Norris you’re going to be very disappointed.

How successfully you’ll protect yourself - both to stay out of fights, and if you get into a fight - is more dependent on your mindset than your training.

If you jumped straight to this chapter, make sure you also read [what is violence?](#).

It is possible to find classes to teach you physical fitness and methods that will ultimately help you stay safe, but unfortunately there are some dodgy schools out there. First I’ll walk you through the good and the bad.

How to spot a McDojo

Most martial arts schools - affectionately known as McDojos - are (at best) teaching a “sport”; not something that will help you in a street fight. At worst, they are fraudsters trying to separate you from your money; nothing more.

There are many styles of hand-to-hand combat, but the most commonly taught ones are from Asia. You know some of them already; Karate, Judo, Jiu Jitsu and Tae Kwon Do are taught in strip-mall dojos across the country.

What they teach is often far removed from the original Asian style - Americanized and commercialized with a belt system that encourages cult-like behavior and is ultimately a money-making scheme.

Simply put, Martial Arts is a business and the belts are their primary product.

Penn and Teller, the TV illusionists, exposed Martial Arts on an episode of their show **Bullshit!**. The show opened with Penn explaining that considering the money spent on Karate lessons it would be better, cheaper and less risky just to hand over their wallets, wristwatch and PIN number if they were attacked.

Search for “[Penn and Teller Bullshit Martial Arts](#)²” and you’ll enjoy the show - I highly recommend that you watch it.

As they say in the show, breaking boards and focusing your inner chi isn’t going to mean jack shit when you’re out on 6th street at 1am on a Friday night. And as they clearly demonstrate, ANYONE can break 5 pine boards without any special training if they know how the parlor trick works.

Please don’t waste your money or your time on a McDojo, no matter what style they teach.

From a story told on bullshido.net:

One of the men I started class with, one of the guys who blazed his way through to black belt in 2 years and stuck with it along with me was beaten up in a way I didn’t think anyone could survive. He was a mass of ripped flesh and broken bones and blood, and that was after a few days of healing. He lost the hearing in one ear and for a while they weren’t sure he was going to walk again. All because he was attacked, and he thought he knew how to defend himself.

²<http://goo.gl/gDRqPX>

He says now that he was confident until he was hit with the first punch. All that kata practice hadn't taught him how to block effectively. We were never taught that a kata is a fight from one side and that the things we were doing represented someone else fighting us. It was just patterns we had to learn. Block-punch-kick... well how in the hell was that supposed to teach us anything when we never really knew what it was in the first place, what the movements represented, and how to counter attack?

*We're not black belts. **We're a bunch of well conditioned dancers.***

So, how do you spot a McDojo? Some tell-tale signs are listed below. The more you spot, the faster you should leave..

- There will be a large picture of the Instructor on the wall when you go in. They will claim to be a high ranking master or even *grandmaster*; typically black belt, 5th Dan or more but they are under 40.³
- The instructor demands respect, rather than earning it. The more overbearing the instructor is, the less they know.
- Ask how old their youngest black belt is. The younger they are, the worse the McDojo is.
- Ask how long it should take to gain a new belt rank - answering "2 months" with a black belt in 2 years is the wrong answer.
- Ask how often they spar, and how they spar. If the sparring is "tournament" sparring with light contact, no punching, take downs or hits below the belt - you may be in a McDojo.
- Classes focus on practicing kata movements individually rather than against other pupils.

³McDojo Sensei are similar to some book authors; you'll hear many references to themselves "kicking ass".

- Any form of board breaking mentioned, pictured or (heaven-forbid) practiced.
- If everyone in class has a black belt
- If they insist that you buy all required equipment from the school.
- If they train you to “pull” your punches or kicks when practicing with a partner.
- You are required to register and commit before trying a lesson.
- There is a special and expensive course that’ll get you a black belt in under a year. I’ve even heard of one quoting under *six months*.

What to look for in a good school

Women. Lots of women.

No, I’m not joking. I’m not sure if it’s a universal truth or not, but if you walk into the building and there are multiple women taking the classes, or teaching them, it’s a great start. I’ve had many Krav Maga classes where half the class were women.

I’ve also been in schools where there were no women, anywhere. Usually the testosterone level is palpable and you get the sense that no women is by design - yes, misogyny is alive and well in schools too. That’s their loss - walk away. I’m talking to guys too.

If you’re a woman, ask about all-women classes. Although training with men has obvious advantages (at some point you’ll need to spar against the size of person that will be attacking you), all-women classes will be easier to start with if you are shy, nervous or don’t know what to expect. Some schools will allow you to take classes like these without monthly membership, just pay-as-you-go.

Talking of membership - look for free trial lessons. Expect a week or two of free access to lessons so you can try out different instructors and days/times.

You need to like and respect your instructors.

As I've said earlier, we all have finely tuned intuition; trust it. There's really no substitute to taking 3-4 classes before you make any decision to continue.

For the training itself, ask an instructor to confirm the following.

- Is there full-contact sparring, with as few rules as possible?
- Is there an emphasis on sparring and conditioning over what I'll condescendingly call "arm and leg waving"?
- Do you train in, or at least discuss grappling and ground fighting?
- Do you ever train in the dark, with spinning or disorientation, and in realistic environments?
- Do you train against multiple attackers?
- Are you taught all relevant self-defense laws?
- Do you need a mouth guard or other protective equipment on day 1?

That last point is worthy of further discussion, but before we do, let me ask you a question; What are we hoping to learn in one of these schools?

What can we practically learn?

There are some side benefits, such as:

- Increased physical conditioning and flexibility
- Camaraderie and a social atmosphere
- You'll have fun! Yes, classes are fun even though they are hard work

The main reason though is to help you stay safe if you are attacked. Note that I didn't say that the point is to learn how to fight⁴.

Many people will sell you on the idea that you can defend against all-comers, and become a true Ninja Warrior™ but we've already shown you how to recognize and ignore those McPeople.

Others will tell you that it's all a waste of your time, and that during violent crime your months or years of training will be useless.

My opinion is somewhere in the middle, but I *am* convinced that my training will help me to some extent, and not just because I'm fitter and faster.

Outside of any particular attacks or defenses, I've learned..

- That often you should de-escalate or run away
- That there are no rules in a fight, so train that way
- That there may be more than one attacker
- That aggression is often necessary to defend yourself
- To overcome the fear of being hurt while defending yourself

I don't suffer from over-confidence; in fact if someone came at me with a broken bottle or knife *with the intent to hurt me*, I'm am under no illusions that I would come out unscathed - quite the opposite.

But the key is that I have a *MUCH* better chance now than before I took classes.

And in less dramatic circumstances - against a pushy drunk guy in bar for example - you can be trained in some very simple yet effective methods like how to get out of someone grabbing your arm or choking you, or how to get out from underneath a larger person - which can be a very useful tool for a woman.

⁴The point is also not to learn how to stick your arms and legs in the air like a Crane or Praying Mantis.

The rules of leverage and force are simple, and once explained and practiced repeatedly can get you out of very dangerous situations. We've trained many times how to get out of choke holds against the ground or a wall - and when you've done it enough times it becomes automatic.⁵

Sparring under stress is also very useful and should start soon after some initial basic training.

In effective training schools you will be often put in situations where you stand with eyes closed in a darkened room and be pushed or choked by a number of attackers. Or have two people hold your arms while a third attacks.

During one early class that my wife attended all the students had to fight past six others just to leave the classroom.

For many women, not used to horseplay, these can be new and stressful experiences, but by practicing them they can learn to overcome the freeze response and begin to automatically defend themselves.

Now back to my earlier point:

- Do you need a mouth guard or other protective equipment on day 1?

This may imply more roughness than some women expect from a self-defense class, and it may put them off from attending.

In fact, safety gear is just a precaution in early classes, and good instructors are not there to get you hurt. But your fellow trainees

⁵When a movement is repeated over time a long-term muscle memory is created for that task, eventually allowing it to be performed without conscious effort.

may be new and uncoordinated too, so it is better to be prepared and not need it than vice-versa!

Especially given the amount of money people pay for straight teeth nowadays.

After just a few months, you will find yourself training harder than you thought possible and you may want to advance into higher levels of class that offer pure sparring where you will certainly value your protective gear.

If you're still going to class after a year - and I'm told it only takes 30 days to form a new habit - you'll be a very different person and much more likely to cope with dangerous situations.

One of my favorite instructors sometimes starts his (higher level) class by offering a choice - choose between crunches to exercise your abs or take turns with your partner punching each other in the stomach. As hard as you can.

Everyone picks the stomach punching, which is hard to explain unless you've done it.

What styles are best?



Krav Maga

Finally I get to your \$64,000 question.

In *our context* of what style to learn to be able to defend ourselves, and given the requirements of full-contact and stressed sparring I recommend you search for one of the following styles, in this order:

- Krav Maga
- Brazilian Jiu Jitsu
- Muay Thai (similar to kickboxing, but with elbow/knee strikes)

Mixed Martial Arts (MMA) could also make your list although it doesn't make mine. It is hugely popular today following the success of Ultimate Fighting Championship (UFC) cage fighting but at the end of the day it is a regulated sport, and suffers accordingly.

Sports train you (consciously or through repeated exercise) not to injure the other party. They train you *not* to savagely assault your opponent.

I recommend that you try more than one style, and certainly more than one instructor, so you can learn from their different perspectives. I train three or four times a week in Krav Maga and a different instructor takes each class.

Even when teaching the same system and curriculum different instructors teach and train quite differently - some may suit you better (you probably mean easier), but take the hard classes too - getting out of your comfort zone occasionally is critical.

Pick a training method where you hit things rather than static training “in the air”. Hitting pads being held by your partner or hanging bags allows you to understand the dynamics of generating power from your attack.

You need to get used to the feeling of hitting hard *and being hit hard* to minimize the risk of freezing during an attack. More later on this.

Don't pull your attacks when training - better to attack at full speed and power but aim to the left or right of your target. Under stress you will likely repeat exactly what you do in training, so don't pull up short of hitting them!

Ultimately, almost any style or workout is better than none. My list or anyone's list only becomes relevant when you have a choice. I'm just very lucky that I have (at least) two good Krav Maga schools in Austin.

It is more important that you don't pick a McDojo.

Train in different environments

Looks for schools that offer special seminars too if possible.

I attended one seminar hosted in another school where the focus was self-defense in real-life situations.

They set up a lot of realistic scenarios such as movie theater, dance hall, airplane fuselage, car and even a one-bedroom apartment.

Defending yourself while in a car, airplane or movie theater offer very different perspectives on the techniques that you must use. If you think about these cramped situations you see yet another reason to ignore those “flying kick” schools.

Training from bad positions, such as on the floor on your stomach with one hand behind your back, will teach you that there are no right answers in a fight - you have to do whatever is necessary to get out and fight back. Often students stop when they get the move wrong and look for another chance - don't stop! Keep going; no-one cares that you got the move wrong in a fight!

I'm reminded of the police officer who trained so often on how to snatch a firearm from a classmate that in real-life he did the same.. and then handed it back to the attacker just like he did in training.

My school regularly hosts a seminar in a real bar so you can put the techniques you have learned to use in a very different environment than a big empty padded classroom. You also start to learn to go from relaxed with friends to an explosive situation very quickly.

Good instructors are the key

Having given you this short list of recommended styles, it is important to point out that you still have to be very careful when choosing your school and instructor(s).

The effectiveness of what you learn is very dependent on your instructor, not just the style you learn.



A bad instructor can still poorly teach your chosen style. Better to find a great instructor in a different style if you have the choice.

Your instructor needs to understand how to use his style effectively, be able to communicate it to you and also explain how their instruction fits into the legal definition of self-defense.

Fighting vs Self-Defense

If you watched the earlier Penn and Teller video you will have seen Marc “Animal” MacYoung from No Nonsense Self Defense.

He has written often about how what is taught as self-defense is actually fighting.

On the subject of [Krav Maga](http://www.nonnonsenseselfdefense.com/Krav.html)⁶ he has said:

From what I've seen if you take someone and train him hard, instill confidence and tell that he will be able to kick ass and take names (in the next college bar fight he is in), then you have succeeded. I mean that seriously and not in a derogatory way. That person is going to be able to hand out an asskicking – to most people who are interested in fighting them.

But that is not the whole story. It is important to understand your responsibility to use your new knowledge and training correctly or it could land *you* behind bars.

⁶<http://www.nonnonsenseselfdefense.com/Krav.html>

As Marc continues:

Take any match you want where two people go at each other. Film it. Then put the participants in street clothes. Change the background to a bar.

Now what do you call what's on the video?

*I call it a **fight**. What's more, it's exactly what the security cameras IN the bar are going to see. And when owner hands it over to the cops and the district attorney, that's what you're going to be charged with. You may win the fight, but the court case is going to go against you, because fighting is NOT self-defense.*

We'll talk about ethics and legal considerations in more detail in a later chapter, but the recurring theme in this book is that you should do *just enough* to stay safe.



It is never your job to punish an attacker once the imminent danger has passed.

You may find this somewhat contrary to what you're being taught. Many classes teach immediate and very aggressive responses to an attack, and rightly so in my opinion, but it is critical to stop as soon as the threat is reduced.

Fighting dirty

I will stress more than once that you must only go “so far” in your defense, but don't be confused; you must do whatever is necessary to get the upper hand on your attacker as soon as possible.

One thing you have to forget from your childhood playground is the idea of fair fighting. That's not what we're talking about here.

We're talking about defending yourself from someone who is intent on hurting or killing you.

You will be taught to go for areas of the body that you may think are off-limits. There are no off-limits in a violent attack, so in particular you could:

- Kick them in the groin or knees.
- Strike them in the throat
- Attack their eyes

However, rather than give you a long list of tips and tricks - like the common and ridiculous "punch with your car key between your fingers" I will again encourage you to find good instructors who can teach you more useful techniques.

Tear Gas and Pepper Sprays

I must admit a certain fondness for pepper spray as a self-defense tool.

That's why I founded a non-profit organization whose mission is to [give a free pepper spray to every woman in America](http://www.resistattack.org)⁷.



Pepper Spray

Let's look at some of the benefits of pepper spray:

- It is very effective; disabling for up to 45 minutes.
- It's accessible, on your keychain and in your hand.

⁷<http://www.resistattack.org/About-Us/Mission>

- It's very inexpensive; under \$5
- It's a non-lethal weapon.
- It's legal to carry almost anywhere.
- Seeing it on your keychain heightens your awareness.
- Many sprays contain dye that allow later identification.
- Holding up a pepper spray may de-escalate the situation.

These benefits combine to give you a tool that is the most important one (other than your brain) that you will carry.

Because pepper sprays are small, easily carried and inexpensive there is no reason why EVERY WOMAN shouldn't have one and carry it on their keychain.

You can buy them at many sporting goods stores, but my colleagues and I at The Resist Attack Foundation have spent a lot of time sourcing the best possible defense spray.

And because we're a non-profit organization, we sell them for under half the price you'll find elsewhere - so you can pay it forward and buy some for family members and friends!

(Yes, we try to give them away free of charge, but unfortunately funds are always limited so we also sell them at cost to get as many out there in women's hands as possible)

Visit www.resistattack.org/giveaway⁸ today for more details.

You can also buy the paperback version in a bundle with a pepper spray giveaway pack so you can help your friends and family protect themselves.

⁸<http://www.resistattack.org/giveaway>

How to use pepper spray

Pepper sprays are very easy to use and because they are aerosol cans you will require very little training or physical strength to use one.

Just having the spray may be enough - hold it up, scream that you have a pepper spray and that may be enough to de-escalate the situation or make them run off.

REMEMBER THE ONLY USEFUL PEPPER SPRAY IS THE ONE IN YOUR HAND.

Do not be tempted to keep it in your purse, pocket or glove box. It can't help you from there.

To use a pepper spray:

1. Hold in your hand and turn the red actuator with your thumb to disable the safety mechanism.
2. Point at the attacker's face
3. Press down firmly. A small 1/2oz spray will contain 8-10 one-second bursts with a range of 6-8 feet.
4. Be wary of wind direction. Don't spray if the wind is in your face - you'll have to wait until they move closer or block the wind.
5. Run. Leave the scene quickly and get help.



Pepper Spray Demonstration

Although the basics are easy, I still recommend that you train with your pepper spray. Buy an extra one and practice with it.

Take it into your yard or the park where no-one else is around, stand 6 feet from a tree and spray it as if it was an attacker.

This will show you how the spray will come out of the can when you discharge it, and make you more effective if you ever have to use it.

Ideally, hold the pepper spray close to you when spraying. Extending your arm increases the risk that your attacker can grab your arm or smack the canister right out of your hand.

As you shoot, keep your eye on the attacker. Don't close your eyes. Aim for their face, and if possible wait for a clear shot of their face before spraying. Short bursts will allow to you aim better and not waste any - but of course feel free to empty the whole can on them if you have the chance.

Be careful that you don't get over confident and too close.

Your aim is always just to get away; not to use the pepper spray to disable them and then punish them by kicking or hitting them.

You don't want to be within their reach at any time.

Pepper spray is not perfect

Be aware of one fact - pepper spray is not guaranteed to have an effect. In the majority of cases it is very quickly effective; it's been formulated that way. But there are enough published examples of people being able to shrug off pepper spray for me to mention it.

In one story of a man arrested while on PCP, he attacked the police officers who emptied "five large canisters" in his face - and he didn't even shut his eyes.

Aim well, take advantage of the distraction and be already running. There's no need to wait and see if the pepper spray had any effect.

What is pepper spray?

Pepper spray has been used by law enforcement agencies and civilians for self defense for several decades.

The basis for the pepper spray recipe, however, dates back much further - to ancient China and India. Packed with red chili pepper, warriors would use different methods to subdue an enemy temporarily. In Japan, ninjas were known to use black pepper to their advantage.

Today, derivatives of the chemicals in peppers are still used to create the modern forms of pepper-based defense systems. Although there have been several advances in the formulation of pepper spray over the past few decades, in general most sprays on the market contain the same chemicals found in natural peppers.

In 1973, the first pepper spray containing oleoresin capsicum (OC), an oil extracted from hot peppers was developed as an aerosol spray. The oil was powdered and suspended in water and pressurized. Its first widespread adoption was by the FBI.

Most pepper sprays are rated 2-3 million scoville heat units - about the same as a very hot habanero pepper.

The active ingredient Capsaicin is so hot - around 16 million scoville heat units - that a single drop in 100,000 drops of water will cause blisters on the tongue!

Capsaicin is also an inflammatory agent, causing a burning sensation, involuntary closing of the eyes, difficulty breathing, runny nose and coughing - these effects last up to 45 minutes.

What is tear gas?

There is some confusion over terms, with many people believing that tear gas means CS gas or the less common CR or CN gases. In fact tear gas is a generic term that covers all lachrymatory agents including OC (pepper) spray.

So pepper spray *is* a tear gas.

All of these gases act in very similar ways although OC gas is quicker to have an effect than CS. Some defense sprays (like ours) contain both OC and CS gas.

Shelf life

The average effective life of pepper spray is up to 3 years. Most will have an expiration date stamped on the canister.

If your canister does not have an expiration date, replace it annually.

Once you replace your pepper spray, the old canister can be used for training and practice on an outdoor target.

OC spray does degrade over time, but it's more likely that the propellant becomes ineffective first. It's for this reason that you replace pepper sprays regularly.

Like any aerosol, do not store in direct sunlight, or excessive cold or heat.

If you live anywhere where it freezes or gets very hot, do not leave your pepper spray in your car!

Remember the temperature inside your car sky-rockets in the summer - so hot that it may burst.

Legality

There are no long-lasting or permanent effects of being sprayed with pepper spray.

Although pepper spray is generally legal to carry in all 50 states, they cannot legally be shipped to some locations.

No vendor in the United States is legally allowed to ship pepper spray by air, or anywhere outside of the Continental United States (lower 48), even to Canada, Alaska, Hawaii, Puerto Rico, Virgin Islands, etc.

In some states you must buy from a local store, you cannot buy online and have it shipped to you. At time of writing, pepper sprays could not be shipped to Massachusetts, New York or Wisconsin (where tear gas is prohibited).

For an up-to-date list of US State laws, visit The Resist Attack Foundation [Pepper Spray Laws^a](http://www.resistattack.org/laws) page.

^a<http://www.resistattack.org/laws>

Other states have some apparent restrictions:

- Michigan - only certain types of Michigan-approved pepper spray can be shipped.
- Florida - 2oz limit
- California - 2.5oz limit
- Arkansas - 5oz limit
- North Carolina - 5oz limit

Age Limits are vague - most states do not specify a minimum age to carry pepper spray. Those that do (New York, New Jersey, Washington) specify 18 years of age. You can carry at 14 in Washington with your parent's permission.

In any other state, 18 years old would be the safest assumption (but may be down to individual officer judgement). Many schools do not allow students to possess pepper spray, even in their locker, so check first.

Traveling with pepper spray

Obviously if you cannot legally carry pepper spray at your destination, don't bother packing it. Even if generally legal, don't forget to check that you meet any size or ingredient restrictions listed above.

There are specific rules stating that pepper spray cannot be carried on your person or in your carry-on luggage while on the plane.

Quote from [TSA website](#)^a:

Self Defense Sprays - One 4 ounce (118ml) container of mace or pepper spray is permitted in checked baggage provided it is equipped with a safety mechanism to prevent accidental discharge. Self Defense Sprays containing more than 2% by mass of Tear Gas (CS or CN) are prohibited in Checked Baggage. For more information visit [www.faa.gov](#), click on Passengers, then [Preparing to Fly](#)^b.

^a<http://www.tsa.gov/traveler-information/prohibited-items>

^bhttp://www.faa.gov/passengers/prepare_fly/

When flying with pepper spray, even with canisters under the 4 ounce limit, be sure to tell the airline that you have the canister when you check in your luggage at the baggage counter. They may be legally required to inspect the canister to make sure that there is a locking device.

What about wasp spray?

You might have heard rumors that wasp spray works better than pepper spray.

Suggestions to purchase bee spray for self defense have been [circulating via email](#)⁹ for the past few years.

If you've gotten an email telling you to buy wasp spray for self defense, think twice. This rumor should not be relied upon for your safety. Although wasp spray *might work*, there are far better options when it comes to protecting yourself.

Wasp spray is a toxin. It might work immediately against some opponents; it might work later and cause them blindness (possibly

⁹<http://www.snopes.com/crime/prevent/waspspray.asp>

permanent), respiratory issues and even anaphylactic shock which could cause their death.

Then again, it might not do anything except irritate the person whom you sprayed.

Of course, if you're attacked in your home you are justified in picking up ANY object and defending yourself, even wasp spray or bleach or whatever you can grab. But it may be a different story from a legal perspective if you are caught carrying wasp spray in your car or purse.

One of the major reasons email rumors suggest wasp spray for self defense is because most canisters are larger and have a range of 20 feet. This is frankly ridiculous because pepper sprays of the same size have always been available that will match or surpass this range.

If you want a large can with extra range, buy a larger pepper spray!

Just realize that although these larger cans are great for security guards (on their belt) or hiking (against bears) you are unlikely to have it on hand when you need it.

With pepper spray, you're getting legal and reliable stopping power. There is simply no reason to trust your safety to something meant to stop wasps.

The US Customs and Border Protection Agency, the United States' largest user of chemical agents such as pepper spray, does not recommend the use of wasp spray for this off-label use.

Neither do the top 8 manufacturers of wasp sprays.

On the other hand, pepper spray is legal, its effects on humans are known and immediate, and it has been used by police and military forces across the world for more than two decades.