

HOW TO WIN A STREET FIGHT



**FOUR SELF-DEFENSE MOVES FROM
COMBATIVES EXPERT KELLY MCCANN**

Photos by Thomas Sanders



In a perfect combatives world, each strike is overwhelming and powerful. Unfortunately, that's never the case because fights don't occur in a perfect combatives world. Still, you should make every effort to deliver each strike as effectively as possible.

Effective strikes look and sound like staccato gunshots as they impact. When you watch new students learning to strike, you won't see or hear gunshots. Instead, you'll see "round," dull and noiseless strikes that push against the target instead of hit it. That's because new students haven't refined their technique, so their strikes land with energy leaks. Energy leaks are caused by incorrect body positioning and poor strike structure. Add to that a failure to build gaps, and the result is ineffective strikes that don't maximize the fleeting opportunities. What would be the point of that?

Striking correctly requires you to:

- choose the right personal weapon
- form the weapon correctly
- minimize telegraphic or preparatory movements
- "whip" the weapon into and through the point of impact
- deposit your bodyweight into the strike
- keep the right structure behind the strike

How important is it to develop good technique? In one study of punching power conducted in England, untrained people punching a 65-pound bag generated only 70 to 100 pounds of force. In contrast, Ricky Hatton, a professional welterweight boxer, generated 900! Spending time learning how to deliver powerful, efficient strikes is well worth your effort because it may be the sole deciding factor when you're fighting for your life.

Based on your personal attributes and as you accrue more training time, you'll start to link strikes together that just seem to flow naturally for you. These are striking "sequences." Effective sequences inherently include many combatives principles. The more inherently applied principles, the better a sequence is likely to be.

Ideally, sequences aren't longer than three strikes. Anything longer would be unrealistic because you'd have to know how your attacker will react to each sequence. Three techniques can be thrown fast enough in succession to hold up no matter what he does. It's the same reason many boxers learn to throw combinations of three punches. You'll notice some of these sequences include takedowns because the strikes naturally set them up. Example: right-hand spearing elbow, right-hand face mash, face-mash takedown.

Don't ingrain your sequences to the point in which your reliance on them diminishes your ability to instantly alter course to exploit a sudden, better opportunity. Keep in mind that mastering strikes alone is not enough to make you proficient in combatives. It's achieving the seamless fusion of strikes, movements and positions while applying the combatives principles.

There are continuous yet brief opportunities during any attack when the right strike, thrown the right way and at the right time, **will** overwhelm an attacker. The combatives principles and training goals discussed in the book *Combatives for Street Survival* will help develop your skill to create and/or recognize these opportunities. Now let's develop the powerful strikes necessary to capitalize on them.

Combatives strikes are broken down by the personal weapons used to execute them. They include the following:

- hand strikes
- elbow strikes
- knee strikes
- combatives kicks

The following techniques will focus on hand strikes.

FINGER JAB

Finger jabs are hand strikes specifically used to diminish your attacker's sight and to set up additional strikes. If you're an MMA fan, you've no doubt seen the result of an accidental finger in the eye. It's not pretty. The injured fighter immediately stops and jerks backward. His eyelids involuntarily flutter shut while his eyes tear profusely. In combatives, the eyes are a **persistent primary target**.

A finger jab is usually thrown with the closest hand to the attacker's face and is an abrupt, explosively fast strike shot directly into his eyes. It's delivered as fast as possible and is one of the few times you sacrifice some power for speed. Finger jabs can stop even the most committed attacker in his tracks, making them a no-brainer. Get to your attacker's eyes early, quickly and repeatedly.

To execute: Abruptly snap your arm straight out as you would a jab in boxing. Keep your hand open with your fingers slightly curved and splayed. Keeping your fingers splayed improves your chances of hitting both of the attacker's eyes instead of just one. Your hand should be slightly angled, like a plane on its final approach for landing. This prevents your fingers from hyperextending on impact.

Finger-Jab Practice



1. Jack's holding a muay Thai forearm shield up and about an arm-and-a-half's length from my face so I can practice my finger jab. From the guard, I snap my hand forward into the pad.



2. In actual use on the street, it's not uncommon for your palm to smash an attacker's nose, crushing it.

The Finger Jab in a Scramble



You can use finger jabs pre-emptively during an attack no matter if you're standing or on the ground. Continuously attack the eyes to disrupt your attacker's vision by making his eyes tear profusely and involuntarily slam shut.

HAMMERFIST

Hammerfists are a great default hand strike for hitting anything in the way, like a face, head, neck, arm or back. They feel very natural to use and protect your hand because they're delivered with the side of your fist, which is the meatiest part.

Hammerfists are big, gross-motor movements that are more than just powerful; they cycle well, also. From a hands-up palms-out index position and without telegraphing your intent, simply smash your hammerfist down into your attacker's face as you vault in.

To execute: To hide tremor and prevent any preparatory movements that telegraph your intent, move your hands vaguely, like you're trying to calm your attacker down as he runs his yap. Explode off whichever foot is most natural for you given the hand you're using to strike. Keep your hand open, flat to the surface of your attacker's face, and your arm relaxed until **just** before impact. At the last second, snap your hand sideways (thumb toward your face) and close your fist. Don't form your fist too early. That'll only slow your hand speed down and result in a less powerful strike.

Keep your forearm perpendicular to the ground and centered on your attacker. Don't let your elbow angle outward or you'll lose power.

Maximize your power by crouching slightly as you vault in. Drop your weight into the strike as your lead foot lands.

Don't lead with your head, stay upright and check your attacker with your opposite hand as you close.

When you cycle hammerfists, fully articulate your arm through the arc of the strike, then pull

The Hammerfist From Hell



1. Chamber your hammerfist as big as the space available and the circumstance allows. This shot is chambered to hit Jack's floating ribs if he gets rambunctious.



2. I've got Jack doubled over and I check him with my left hand on the back of his neck. I just keep replacing my check with my hammerfist to cycle. Repetitive strikes are like pistons on a camshaft. If Jack gets froggy, I'll retract my check and drop the hammerfist.

Hammerfist Practice



Strike through the pad. Visualize your hand hitting your knee.

the hammerfist through to chamber for each repetition. Whip your fist around to gather momentum and then slam it back into your attacker. Don't mimic hammering a nail. Your chambering movement is much bigger, more like winding up and throwing a baseball.

FACE MASH

A face mash—yep another hand strike—is executed the same as a hammerfist except your hand stays open, allowing a larger area of it to contact on impact. Face mashes slam into your attacker's face and forcefully snap his head back while smashing his nose and his eyes. It's a more comprehensive head strike than a finger jab or the hammerfist, which are used to concentrate striking force in only one area.

A face mash explodes into your attacker's face and transfers a tremendous amount of force directly into his face and head. Don't bother trying to cycle face mashes because they just don't work well ergonomically.

The best follow-up technique for a face mash is a takedown. Just transition your ever present upper-arm check to a trap and don't retract your other hand from the attacker's face after the strike. Instead, pull his arm toward you and lift the elbow of the arm you mashed him with. Shove his face back, rotating his head backward and down. Shuffle forward quickly to maintain contact as he falls. You can follow up the takedown with an armbar. Or you can just let go, and he'll fall onto the ground.

To execute: Read the instructions on how to execute a hammerfist. Don't close or turn your hand. Done.

Face-Mash Practice



Note the surface area of my hand on Jack's face. Not only will the impact have a good effect, but also his neck snapping backward amplifies results.

Face-Mash Madness



1. I end this stick disarm with a violent vertical face mash, slamming Jack's head sideways into the deck.



2. You can see the effect using face mashes has on Jack in this photo. He's turned his head away, making it difficult to reorient on me, while I chamber another strike.

AX HAND

An ax hand is a penetrating hand strike best used on the sides of an attacker's neck, face, front of his throat or base of his skull. It's also a useful technique to disengage from grabs and use during other situational self-offense sequences on an attacker's forearms.

To execute: Vault off the foot opposite to your striking hand at an oblique angle. Vault into your attacker and in the direction of your strike. Your weight drops as your lead foot falls. On impact, shrug your hips and shoulder violently to unload as much torque as possible into the strike. Visualize your ax hand cutting through your attacker.

Keep your arm and hand relaxed as they whip toward your attacker. On impact, thrust your thumb outward, stiffening your entire hand like you're saluting but with your thumb extended. This prevents the weapon (your hand) from collapsing in the middle on impact and subsequently not being stiff enough to penetrate deeply into the target.

Aim your strike deep. If you try to put your hand *exactly* on the side of your attacker's neck, you could miss altogether if he pulls back slightly. The margin for error is too small. On the other hand, if you aim deep, your strikes are more likely to

Ax-Hand Practice



1. I push off my left foot in the direction of the strike, keep my left guard hand up and whip the strike into the pad. Note that I'm pushing my weight into the strike. Also, look at my right foot. It's going to land just as my strike impacts.



2. This hand placement is optimal, but if I hit Jack with my forearm, that's OK, too. The point is to get the strike off in time and with power. If it's not perfect, don't sweat it. Fire off some more!

land perfectly. If the attacker doesn't pull back, you're going to clock him with some point along your forearm. All good.

In a perfect world, you'd want to concentrate maximum power into the smallest impact area of any target to penetrate as deeply as possible. But you're not fighting in a perfect combatives world; you're fighting a crackhead with a knife on the corner of Shithouse Road and 32nd Ave. It's better to hit an attacker and achieve an 80-percent effect than to miss him because you tried for perfect hand placement and got a zero-percent effect instead. Don't wait for the perfect opportunity to fire the perfect shot because it may never appear.

Ax-Hand Attack

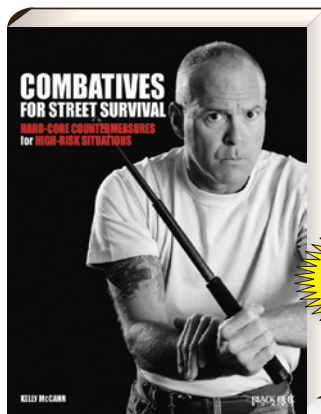


Here's another use of the ax hand. I complete this disarm by ripping the pistol from Jack's grip as I slam his soft tissue with my ulna by using an ax-hand movement.

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HARD-CORE COUNTERMEASURES for HIGH-RISK SITUATIONS

by Kelly McCann



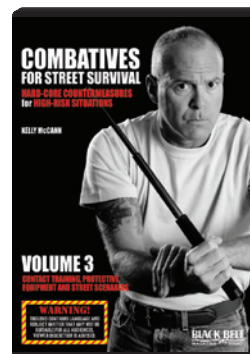
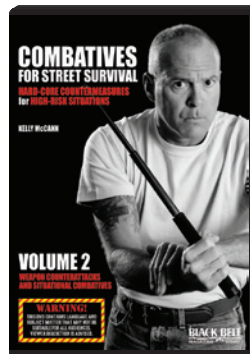
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