

MARTIN J. DOUGHERTY

FIGHT TO WIN

20 SIMPLE
TECHNIQUES
THAT WIN
ANY FIGHT



TUTTLE

FIGHT TO WIN



MARTIN J. DOUGHERTY

FIGHT TO WIN

20 SIMPLE
TECHNIQUES
THAT WILL WIN
ANY FIGHT

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Disclaimer

Please note that the publisher and author(s) of this instructional book are NOT RESPONSIBLE in any manner whatsoever for any injury that may result from practicing the techniques and/or following the instructions given within. Martial arts training can be dangerous—both to you and to others—if not practiced safely. If you're in doubt as to how to proceed or whether your practice is safe, consult with a trained martial arts teacher before beginning. Since the physical activities described herein may be too strenuous in nature for some readers, it is also essential that a physician be consulted prior to training.

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Introduction

This book is about winning fights. It presents a simple, easy-to-learn body of technique along with the psychological, tactical, and technical factors needed to make it work. The techniques presented here are equally applicable to self-defense and sporting applications, though not all of them are legal in every type of competition.

The techniques in this book are found, in some shape or form, in most martial arts and at least some are likely to be familiar to any given martial artist. This does not mean that the techniques in this book are the best possible versions of the most effective techniques for any given situation. Instead, they were chosen for their ease of use and flexibility. They will get the job done under almost any circumstances, without needing a lengthy period of training to achieve effectiveness.

The system presented here is—as the title of the book suggests—a shortcut to combat effectiveness. If you can do everything presented here, do it well and do it at the right time, then you will be an extremely effective fighter. Reaching that level of skill and ability will not take very long because the techniques are simple and there is a fairly small number of them. The intent is to reach a solid level of all-round capability as quickly as possible. From this base, it is possible to progress in several directions, but as a general rule it is better to become very skilled with a small number of techniques than to collect dozens of variations.

While this book does allow a fighter to take a shortcut through the maze of available techniques, there is still no substitute for hard training—ideally with a good instructor or at least a competent partner. The shortcut is in terms of content, that is, not having to waste time learning a vast body of ungraded technique before getting to what you need, or going down blind alleys while experimenting with techniques. It is still necessary to put in the time to become skilled at these techniques and the system that binds them together. However, the time required to become highly skilled with twenty techniques is obviously going to be less than that required for several dozen.



Whether competition or “street,” a fight is an unpleasant environment to be in, where nothing ever goes according to plan. Simple techniques done well are a better option than flashy or overcomplex moves, despite how good they look in training.



With an attack coming in, it is necessary to do something about it right now, rather than the perfect thing a second too late. If what you do works well enough to keep you in the fight, then that’s good enough.

There is no intent here to insult any martial art, nor to suggest that much of a given system is useless. The body of technique in any martial art exists for a reason, and there is much to learn from full and formal art. However, the purpose of most martial arts classes is not to produce an effective all-round fighter in the shortest possible time. This book is aimed at those whose goal is to become such a fighter, whether or not they also train in a formal martial art.

Most of the techniques in this book are equally applicable to Mixed Martial Arts (MMA) and self-defense. Some are more appropriate in a sporting context; some are illegal in most forms of competition. Applications are discussed when each technique is presented. All the techniques are found in mainstream martial arts, though not all of them will be contained within any given art. Thus a judo player will be familiar with the takedowns and chokes, though he may give them different names, and a kickboxer will find that most of the strikes are contained in his art. These techniques are

found at the core of fighting systems that have been in use for centuries, for the very good reason that they work.

There are various names for the techniques covered here. We will use generic titles for simplicity, highlighting similar techniques in common martial arts. As a rule, a technique that does the same job in roughly the same way can be considered to be equivalent. If your “home” art has a workable technique that fills the same niche as one presented here,”then you would be well advised to use the one you already know rather than trying to learn another way to get the same job done. After all, if you already have a chrome spanner, why go out and buy one that’s been painted yellow? It’s the same tool, and it does the same job.



Often there are underlying principles that make techniques work. The concept of “broken balance” is vital to many restraining standing submissions, and takedowns. On the right, balance is broken by bending him backwards, making it very difficult to resist or counter the hold.

Remember, our aim here is to develop combat effectiveness, not to learn a specific group of techniques and impress a panel of grading judges with them. That is the underlying theme throughout the book—no matter how scrappy or messy a technique looks, if it works then it’s a good one. Techniques are tools for winning fights. They need to be performed well to get good results, but it’s the result that matters. Sloppy technique can be fixed later; a lost fight will stay lost.



Your “combat toolkit” must be flexible enough to be applied in many different situations. In most cases there’s no rocket science involved — a punch is pretty much a punch whether it’s delivered standing up or in ground-and-pound. The hard part is putting yourself where that punch can be most effectively delivered.

Martial Artist or Fighter?

Martial Arts and Personal Combat

The term “martial art” can be defined as “fighting system,” or perhaps “military (or warrior) skills.” All martial arts have their origins in personal combat, often in a military context. However, over time the focus has drifted, and today the various activities that come under the heading of martial arts are quite varied. Not all martial arts have fighting as their focus, and some really have nothing to do with combat any more.

Some arts are geared more towards fitness, sport, personal development, the preservation of traditional systems, and all kinds of other goals. This does not make any of them intrinsically good or bad. If an art does what it is supposed to—like looking amazing on demonstrations, or instilling confidence and self-discipline in children—and does it well, then it is by definition good for its stated purpose and a worthy endeavor in its own right.

For our purposes, though, we are mostly interested in combat effectiveness and it is fair to say that some arts are more useful for personal combat than others. However, even the best fighting system has weak areas and blind spots. Finding them and plugging the gaps is the primary reason for a system to evolve over time. Early Mixed Martial Arts competitions demonstrated the need to be an all-around fighter. A combatant who can exploit the gaps in his opponent’s capabilities can win an easy victory, so it is logical to develop the capability to deal with all of the likely threats. Equally, some capabilities are not necessary to some martial arts due to their competition rules.



The axe kick looks awesome but it’s very hard to land one in a serious fight. The time spent learning to perform such difficult techniques is better spent on bread-and-butter skills.

It is important to view any given martial art in this light. For example, a striking art that does not allow any form of grappling or punches to the head in its competitions has obvious weak areas when outside these artificial constraints. It is optimized for a particular style of combat and is strong there

For example, ju-jitsu and judo contain many of the same throws and takedowns, but a ju-jitsu practitioner is expected to also learn striking and many submissions that are not contained in the judo body of technique. Which is better? That depends entirely on what you want to do with it. If your aim is to do well in judo competition, then you would be well advised to train in judo. For more general applications, ju-jitsu is more flexible.

A given martial art is not “bad” or “useless” if it does not cover one or another aspect of personal combat, but it may not be a good choice if all-round capability is your goal. Many highly focused arts contain excellent techniques within their own arena but are weak elsewhere. The only time this is a problem is when an instructor of one of those arts discounts a threat his students are ill-equipped to deal with effectively.



There is little point in training to fight from the clinch in a sport where the fighters are quickly separated, such as boxing. Clinch work is vital for more general applications, not least as a transition stage between “standup” and your “ground game.”

So it is perfectly fine to say something like, “we’re teaching non-contact karate. It’s excellent for fitness, self-discipline and we clean up in non-contact point fighting competitions” if that’s true. The same instructor claiming “We’re teaching non-contact karate, the ultimate fighting system even for Grapplers? Pah, you just kick them right off the planet before they can grab you!” may actually not realize that what he is saying is untrue, but nevertheless it is a misleading claim.

It is necessary to be realistic about martial arts when seeking somewhere to train. A “good” art does what it is supposed to, whatever that may be. Good does not always equate to ideal for personal combat though. It is worth looking at a few different classes before committing to something. However, just because an art is not the ultimate all-round fighting system does not mean you should pass it up. If you enjoy it and get something out of it, then it’s a good place to train. There is nothing to stop you going to a class for fun and working on fight-winning skills elsewhere.

Self-defense vs. Sport

The “Street vs. Sport” debate has probably raged for as long as there have been streets and combat sports. The crux of the argument is that the sporting environment is different to that encountered outside a pizza shop at 2 a.m., and the real or imagined differences between the two are used as ammunition by those who claim that various martial arts techniques will or will not work “on the street.”

The truth is that there are indeed differences between a sporting environment and “real” personal combat. There are also a number of close similarities. Assuming that you are not expecting to wrestle

crocodiles or something, your likely opponent will be built like most other human beings. Maybe a bit bigger or smaller, but in possession of the same number of arms, legs, and heads, equipped with the same weapons and vulnerable in the same places.



“Sport” groundfighting is subject to artificial rules about what you can and can’t do. The fighter who makes best use of position and leverage will be able to apply a submission technique and win...



... which really isn’t any different to “Street” groundfighting. You just have a few more tools at your disposal and some nasty dirty tricks to watch out for. Position and leverage are still the keys to success, whatever sort of ground you’re fighting on.

The fact that humans are all put together in much the same way means that they tend to do much the same things in a fight. There are cultural and environmental differences of course, but as a rule the instincts to grab and strike are the same the world over. Thus the things that work in a cage match are surprisingly similar to those that work when rolling around in the street outside a nightclub.

Generally speaking, the victor in a fight will be the fighter who:

- Makes best use of his own physical capabilities
- Prevents the opponent from utilizing his own advantages
- Takes into account any environmental factors

The first two are self-explanatory—fight better than the other guy and don’t let him do what he wants to if you can avoid it. The third is a little more subtle. Environmental factors can include things like showing the judges what they need to see in order to award you victory, making use of the limited space in a ring or fighting area as well as various “street” factors. These include the presence of your friends, the opponent’s friends and any bystanders who might become involved plus traffic, curbs, broken glass, and anything else that might influence the course of a fight.



Dojo, cage, ring, or street; the same basic principles apply to effective fighting. If you can break the opponent's posture and control his head, his options are severely limited.



Any grappling situation will be characterized by move and counter-move, with the position of the fighters dictating what options are available. Pulling the head down will get someone under control, the response is grabbing the leg and trying to overbalance the opponent.

The primary difference between “street” and “sport” are that in a sporting event there are rules (usually) weight categories and other factors intended to create a reasonably fair fight, and relative minor consequences in the case of defeat. An opponent who throws in the towel or taps out in a sporting event is likely to be safe, and on the opposite side of that coin, an opponent who gives up is no longer a threat. He is not likely to start throwing punches as soon as you let go of him.

Conversely, there is no guarantee that a “street” opponent will not beg for mercy then attack you after you have released him. His friends or random passers-by may decide to join in, or there may be weapons involved. You cannot guarantee good footing and a suitable fight environment. There is also likely to be some doubt and confusion about whether or not a fight is about to start, whereas in a sporting event you will know what you are expected to do, and when.

However, fighting skills are fighting skills. It has been suggested that a “street” opponent can bite and gouge eyes, making conventional grappling skills invalid. The first half of that sentence is true, but the second does not necessarily follow. After all, biting and eye-gouging are just tools, just like an armbar or a choke. Fighting skills are about using the tools you have at your disposal and stopping the opponent from using his. Whether the tool is an armlock or a bite, the positional skills you learn in training will help you use your tools and defend against those of the opponent.

It is necessary to tailor your tactics to the situation. Striking is not allowed in a judo match so you can expect your opponent not to punch you in the face. Instead, you must watch for attempts to throw you or take you down. In a street fight, with a risk that someone might run up and kick you while you work your opponent, trying to set up an armbar on the ground might not be an ideal tactic. You can usually afford to take your time in a sporting match, which may not be an option under “street” circumstances.

One of the key fighting skills that you need to develop is to appraise the situation and adapt to it. The skills you use are much the same; for example you can use groundfighting skills to disengage from a “street” attacker who has managed to take you down, or to obtain a submission from a sporting opponent. The skills are much the same; the important thing is to use them intelligently and to adapt to the situation.

Habits can be dangerous in this context. If you routinely train in an environment with rules against striking or grappling, it is possible to become over-fixated with one mode of combat, and to develop a blind spot regarding possible attacks. This can be overcome by occasionally changing the rules during application work such as rolling, sparring, or self-defense drills.



Very few techniques have only one application. The “arm wrap” movement normally used to trap an arm can also give you control of an opponent’s leg, which can protect from being kicked.

There is nothing complex about any of this; it is simply a matter of being realistic about what will work in a given environment and fighting accordingly. The basic principles of personal combat are exactly the same for the street as they are for the sporting environment. The ability to adapt to changing circumstances is one of the hallmarks of an effective fighter. A good fighter is a good fighter wherever they happen to be.

Winning A Fight

Winning simply means making the fight end on the most favorable terms you can obtain. Sometimes it is possible to emerge victorious and unscathed; on other occasions the price of victory can be high. As a rule, more effective fighters take less punishment on the way to victory, but there is more to that than simple fighting ability. The best way to avoid getting hurt in a fight is to make it end quickly, which requires a combination of techniques, tactics, and psychological factors.

There are three ways a fight can end: self-stop, inability to continue, or intervention. Multiple variations of each exist, but all fall under these general headings.

Self-stop

Self-stop occurs when one combatant decides not to fight any more. This can take the form of surrender, voluntary collapse or a choice to break off. In a sporting context, the most common form of surrender is tapping out.

Some submissions do not cause harm but hurt so much that most opponents will tap out if they cannot escape. Opponents with a huge pain tolerance, or who are drunk or drugged, may not submit despite incredible pain. The threat of physical damage, or the ability to inflict damage, may be necessary to get some opponents to submit. Pain alone, or just holding someone in place, is rare enough to make the opponent give up. The combination of pain and helplessness, i.e. a situation where the only submission will make the pain stop, is far more effective than just one or the other.



On the left, the arm is isolated and all he has to do is crank the lock. Resisting will just result in injury, so tapping out will indicate a concession of the bout. This is the most common form of self-stop in a sporting contest.

It is possible to take the fight out of some assailants by applying a painful restraint or submission and warning them of what will happen if they carry on fighting. This is only worth trying if you think there is a reasonable chance of success. Someone who is clearly determined to fight will not self-stop in this manner.

Self-stop can occur before actual violence begins, for example where a potential assailant realizes that you could hurt him quite badly and decides that finding an easier target might be a good idea. The same can happen during a fight when one opponent realizes that he is getting the worst of it, or that the price of victory will be higher than he is prepared to pay. Sometimes an opponent panics and begins to desperately try to get away, but more often self-stop occurs when, for whatever reason, the combatants move apart and there is an instant to take stock of the situation.

It is important to be able to recognize an opponent who has self-stopped. The condition does not always last; sometimes an opponent will get back into a fighting mindset. It is critical to exploit the situation while it lasts. In a sporting context, an opponent who has given up in his mind but has not conceded the bout presents an opportunity to finalize the victory. A determined attack at this point may cause him to simply fold up, or the referee may end the bout. Even if this is not the case, you can still press your advantage while the opponent is mentally out of the fight. By the time he pulls himself together you will have tipped the odds even further in your favor.

In a self-defense situation, an opponent who has self-stopped will often posture and make threats—usually while walking backwards away from you—to save face. At this point you have won, providing you do not give him a reason to get back into the fight. He will most likely retreat behind a barrage of abuse and threats. If you let him go, the matter is over. If, on the other hand, you show weakness (e.g. by dropping your guard) or say something that pricks his ego and makes him angry,

enough to come back for another go, then you will have to fight him all over again.

An opponent who is moving away from you is almost certainly not inclined to fight, but someone who says the same words while staying close to you is still a threat. Correctly reading the situation will allow you to bring the matter to a close without further effort. The opponent will probably go and tell other people that he won, or that he would have if only... whatever reason he invents... has happened. That does not really matter; what is important is that you have ended the situation on reasonably favorable terms. Your ego might like it better if you battered the opponent senseless, but that is not necessary. And of course, whatever the opponent might say, you both know what really happened. He gave up; you won.

Self-stop can also take the form of voluntary collapse. This occurs when one fighter cannot take any more and goes down. Exhaustion often causes a fighter to give up—a blow that would have been merely painful in the first round may cause a boxer to fold up and go down in round nine, simply because his will to continue has been eroded by weariness. The decision to give up is not always conscious; it is often triggered by self-preservation instincts.

A fighter who is down and winded may be physically capable of getting back to his feet and carrying on, though most likely in a feeble manner that will merely invite more damage. He has an opportunity for voluntary collapse, and it may well be the right decision. Fighting on until you are too broken to even get up may be admirable in some ways, but it achieves little and is unlikely to result in a victory. Going down, or staying down for the count, might be the right decision. It might also be the only possible option—the will to fight can be broken just as the body can be damaged.

This is especially true in a sporting contest, where survival is not threatened. Sometimes a fighter subconsciously decides that he is taking too much damage for what is at stake. A knockdown or momentary pause provides an opportunity to collapse, ending the bout. This subconscious decision to give up can be overridden by a determined fighter, but only so many times. Everyone has their limits.



A fighter who is down but not out has a tough decision to make: get up and risk taking more punishment, or accept defeat? Fatigue and pain can wear down a fighter until he just can't go on.

It is easy to be contemptuous of someone who chooses to go down to a blow that they could have taken and fought on, or who taps out to a painful but not damaging submission. However, it is not as simple as that. A fight is more than an exchange of physical techniques; combatants attack one another with the will to fight at the same time as they inflict pain and damage on the body and attempt to tire one another out.

These three factors—physical damage, tiredness, and the erosion of the will to fight—are interrelated. ~~A fighter who gives up easily may be worthy of contempt perhaps, but one who is worn down in a tough contest deserves respect whether his inability to fight on stems from exhaustion, physical damage, or mental defeat.~~

Inability to Continue

Inability can occur for two reasons; either the opponent is physically unable to continue fighting, or he is prevented from doing so by some means. The latter could be because you have escaped. If you can run away, get to the other side of a door and lock it, or put some other barrier in the way then the fight cannot continue. This is not really applicable to a sporting bout, unless you want to jump out of the ring and leg it into the changing rooms. It is, however, a valid gambit in a self-defense situation.

It is even possible to consider escape as a “win.” If you were sufficiently overmatched that you would suffer serious injury then an escape, however undignified, is a better outcome. However, the “just run away” school of self-defense thinking is rather limited. There is no point in fleeing from someone who is likely to pursue and catch you; you’ll just have to fight when you’re tired. Escape is a tool for ending a fight like any other but it must be used intelligently.

If it is not possible to escape and the opponent cannot be induced to give up (i.e. self-stop), then the only option is to render him physically incapable of fighting. There are two ways to do this; either by inflicting sufficient harm on his body that he cannot use it to fight with, or by switching off the control mechanism by inducing unconsciousness. That can be achieved by blows to the head, by causing the head to strike something, or by the use of a choke or strangle. The latter is safe enough if you know what you are doing, but can cause death if kept on too long.

The simplest way of inducing an inability to continue, in principle at least, is a knockout blow to the head. However, in practice, this can be hard to deliver; mainly because the opponent will protect his head. Temporary inability can be induced by winding the opponent with a body blow, which might also lead to a self-stop. Alternatively, it is possible to damage body parts so that they cannot be used.

Most of the techniques normally termed joint locks and submissions were originally designed to destroy or disable a joint. In a sporting context they are usually applied firmly and steadily, causing pain and the threat of injury if the opponent does not submit. Continued pressure will cause damage to the joint, or alternatively the lock can be slammed on hard and fast with no attempt at control. This gives the opponent no chance to tap out and would only be done in self-defense, where the intent is to disable an assailant rather than to win a sporting contest.

Intervention

Intervention in a sporting context can take the form one fighter’s corner “throwing in the towel” sometimes literally. This is one responsibility of the corner man—to surrender on behalf of a fighter who is too stubborn to give up but who is suffering unacceptable harm. Alternatively, the referee may stop a fight for various reasons. In a sporting bout, intervention is normally a matter of fighter safety and there are rules in place to govern this. As with tapping out or submitting in any similar manner, submitting in a sport bout is final; the fight is over and there is a clear winner.

In a self-defense context, intervention can take many forms, not all of them useful. A fight between two individuals can be greatly complicated by bystanders or friends trying to separate the fighters or assist them. It is not uncommon for someone to get hurt because a well-meaning bystander or girlfriend was swinging on their arm trying to drag them away.

Intervention can also take the form of security or police personnel arriving to deal with the incident, or passers-by deciding to join in. It is not uncommon for totally uninvolved people to run up

and kick someone who is fighting or even lying helpless on the ground. This possibility for random intervention makes street fights, especially those that go to the ground, something of a gamble.



In a sporting context, intervention normally takes the form of a coach or referee halting proceedings. When the guy in charge says it's over, it's over. Things are less clear-cut on the street.

However, it is possible to use the intervention of others as a tool to end a situation. One of the few times when it is worth applying a restraint in a self-defense situation is when assistance is readily available. If an assailant can be restrained and handed over to police or security personnel, or if your friends are available to quickly dissuade him from continuing the altercation, then restraint may be a reasonable option. Otherwise, it is probably not a good idea unless the opponent is not much of a threat. The last thing you need is to be entangled with one opponent, trying to apply a restraint, only to be hit by one of his friends.

Winning

It is easy to think of “winning” a fight in terms of a clear-cut victory, but this is usually the case only in sporting bouts. In a self-defense context, “winning” is a more nebulous thing. It is more about you than the opponent, inasmuch as your goal is more likely to be to prevent yourself (or someone you want to protect) from coming to harm. It is not all that important how you achieve this, and indeed, a situation that involved you knocking the other guy clean out but taking a few shots into the bargain might be considered less of a victory than one where you were able to talk him down and never exchanged blows.

Winning, as already noted, is a matter of ending the situation on the most favorable terms you can obtain. There are many routes to that goal. In a sporting bout you can win by knockout or submission or by wearing the opponent down until he cannot go on any longer. You may even be able to induce him to do something that will get him disqualified, though this is a fairly hollow sort of victory. In any case, a winner will be announced so the situation is fairly clear-cut. In a self-defense situation things are more nebulous. Winning can be achieved by many of the same methods, but there are many victories to be won in other ways too. An opponent who is dragged off by nightclub security, or who allows his friends to persuade him that you are not worth it, will not trouble you any more so this can be considered a victory.



The “fence” is used by security professionals worldwide. It is essentially a modified fighting stance designed to be non-threatening but to keep potential aggressors at bay while remaining ready to react if necessary.



Often the psychological barrier of the fence posture is enough to deter an aggressor. If not, he can be pushed vigorously away with firm command to keep his distance.



Often, a potential aggressor can be deterred in this manner. If he comes back again after being pushed away, he is clearly determined to fight and must be dealt with accordingly.

In short, it is necessary to understand what you are trying to achieve in order to have the best chance of victory. In a sports bout your aim will usually be to be declared the winner by the judges. In a self-defense context your goal is more likely to be to avoid coming to serious harm. If that is achieved by hurting the assailant, so be it, but knocking him out or whatever you must do to him is not the goal, it is merely an outcome. The goal is to get home safely, and so long as you achieve this then you have won.

What Makes an Effective Fighter?

Several factors, usually in combination, can make a fighter effective. There is no single formula for success; two equally good fighters may have entirely different advantages. However, the single overriding factor is mental rather than physical. It has many different names—guts, sand, heart, willingness, and élan to name a few—but what they all allude to is fighting spirit, the will to win, or, in some cases, sheer desperation.

The adage that, “it’s not the size of the dog in the fight, but the size of the fight in the dog” may be a bit trite, but it is true. A skilled fighter can be beaten by a drunk brawler who just keeps throwing haymakers; a determined assailant can be driven off by a small, weak person who refuses to give up.

That said, will power alone does not guarantee success. Rather, it makes it possible. Without the will to struggle on and keep fighting, to risk taking painful blows or possibly being seriously hurt, it is not possible to defeat any but the most feeble opponent. Lack of will, or fighting spirit, can rob a fighter of a win in another way too; they may be unwilling to do what is necessary to complete the victory.

Someone who is winning has less at stake than their opponent. For example, a fighter who has a dominant position and is struggling to apply a submission, or an assailant who is hoping to deliver a beating, has less incentive to keep going in the face of determined resistance than their disadvantaged opponent. The aggressor in a street assault has the choice of being able to break off any time they like. The defender often does not have this luxury. Likewise, someone trying to resist a submission does not have the option just to let go, but a fighter who is trying to apply one does.



Many factors combine to create an effective fighter, but high on the list is a combination of good coaching and hours spent on the mat, learning what works and struggling through when everything goes wrong.

If the defender is struggling hard and causing pain, he may cause an insufficiently determined opponent to back off. A given amount of pain may be entirely ignored when a fighter's attention is focused on getting a choke off his throat, because there is a more urgent concern. However, it requires rather more determination to accept the same amount of pain when it is less necessary. A fighter who chooses to relinquish his submission attempt loses little if he retains a dominant position. He is still winning, so may choose to find a different avenue of attack if the present one is costing him too much.

This factor is equally important to sporting and self-defense fighters. On the street, an assailant may decide that you are too much trouble. In the ring, it is sometimes possible to get out of a desperate situation by making the price tag for finishing you off a bit too high. Conversely, it is possible to lose a fight because you were not willing to accept the price of finishing it. An effective fighter weighs up the costs and the potential gains of his options—usually in a split second—and acts accordingly. He is willing to pay an affordable price to obtain a submission, but will not expose himself to the risk of unnecessary damage.

This ability to make rational decisions mid-fight is another hallmark of the effective fighter. It is possible to win by blindly bulling through, a method that works well enough for many aggressive drunks. However, a skilled fighter can exploit an opponent who over-commits to the attack, and a tough one can often win simply by surviving long enough for the attacker to tire himself out with h

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