

KNIFE DEFENCE TACTICS

Lateral Closes

The lateral close is the most commonly taught method of defending against a thrusting, lunging or cutting attack.

There are two methods of using the lateral close.

The first is to side step your opponent's forward movement.

When the opponent attacks, you step either to the right or left of the attack while maintaining your ground. The result is that you end up very close to your opponent on the right or left side of his body.

The second method for lateral closing is to move diagonally toward your opponent.

Before your opponent moves forward to attack you, you make a pre-emptory strike by stepping out to the side and toward him. The result is that you move into your attacker's space and end up very close to the left or right side of his body.

Both methods allow you to effectively close the distance while avoiding the attacker's weapon and the key to defending against any weapon is to effectively and quickly get close to the assailant.

The weapon wielding attacker's biggest asset is space. By holding a weapon, he extends his range of attack by several feet and thereby shortens your range.

Once you pass by the outer reaches of his range, the place where he is holding the weapon, you blunt his options for attack and take away his advantage.

When you get very close, you force him to resort to grabbing you or blocking your attack, distracting his attention from his weapon and lessening his advantage still further.

The Lateral Outside Close

There are two types of lateral closes: the outside close and the inside close.

Each type describes the direction of your movement relative to your opponent's body and can be executed using either of the above methods. In the examples that follow, we will assume you are defending against an attacker who is stepping or lunging forward to attack you.

The outside close is the safer of the two types.

To execute, face a partner who is holding a training (rubber or wooden) knife in his right hand.

When your partner steps toward you and thrusts the knife at you, step out to your left just far enough to let the knife pass by you.

Use your hands to guide your partner's arm as it passes by you while getting a firm grip on his wrist or forearm with your right hand.

If you did the technique correctly, you should find yourself standing very close to your partner's upper arm or shoulder and your right hand should be holding your partner's attacking hand firmly at your side.

When performed correctly, the advantages of the outside close are significant.

It puts you outside of the line of attack. It reduces your chances of getting cut.

It puts you in the advantageous position of being almost behind your attacker and it makes your opponent feel very vulnerable because he now has to turn around to defend himself.

To make you're outside closing more effective, practice building speed and accuracy in your initial movement and learning to anticipate how your attacker will move.

If you anticipate correctly and move quickly, the outside close is an almost perfect defence.

Once you complete the successful close, you can apply a variety of finishing techniques.

You may choose to strike to the back of the head, spine, or behind the knee or you may prefer to apply a choke, headlock or armlock from behind.

If you are very skilled in restraining techniques, you can use an arm lock to take away the knife or force your attacker into submission.

Lateral Inside Close

The lateral inside close is somewhat more risky but much more intimidating.

To perform an inside close, face your partner as in the first example.

When you partner steps in and attacks with his right hand, move to your right and toward the center line of your partner's body while holding on to his attacking arm with your left hand.

When done correctly, you should end up right in front of your partner's chest and face, while holding his right arm at your side with your left hand.

This is clearly an intimidating position for your partner because you have cut his weapon off from his line of vision and you have placed your body between him and his weapon making it impossible for him to attack you with it.

You have also exposed key targets for attack, including the critical targets on the centreline of his head and body. From this position you can easily strike his face, possibly taking away his vision.

You are also in a position to attack his throat, groin and vital organs of the chest/stomach.

However, you have now presented him with the same opportunities, which makes the inside close a risky move for inexperienced martial artists.

Once you use the inside close, you must have a specific plan to finish your attacker quickly, either by striking the vital areas or by applying a controlling technique, such as a take down or an arm lock.

You must also be acutely aware of your opponent's actions and prepare to defend against a renewed attack from his free hand or his legs.

The Deadly Pass or Faint Pass

The final technique for closing the distance against a weapon is one that you won't see taught often.

It is the most dangerous, both to the attacker and the defender, and it is recommended only for experienced practitioners.

The pass is dangerous even in practice and should only be practiced by martial artists who are skilled in falling and do not have any pre-existing back or neck injuries.

Always practice on a soft surface and never at full speed.

With these cautions in mind, have your partner face you as before and move forward with a right-handed attack.

Step out to the left, as if performing an outside close, but take two steps by your partner so that you are behind him.

You have now "passed" your partner and have several options.

You may grab his hair, head or shoulders and pull him backwards.

You may apply a choke or lock from behind.

You may kick his spine, tailbone, or knee to knock him forward. Or you may strike the back of his head.

To be effective, the pass and follow-up technique should be performed as a single move.

In an instant, you have to move by your attacker and apply a single deadly attack before he realises where you are.

The result of a correctly performed pass is that your attacker never sees it coming and is literally blindsided by your attack.

If you choose to pull the attacker backward, he will certainly hit his head to the ground, knocking him unconscious if the ground is hard.

If you push him forward, he will likely hit his face on the ground, causing the same result.

If you choose to strike him from behind, he will suffer a full force blow with no warning or defence, a potentially lethal strike for even the biggest opponent.

The pass is not recommended for beginners.

You run the risk of becoming disoriented or losing your footing when you move so quickly and with such force.

You also risk being tripped by yourself or your assailant as you pass by and finally, you run the risk of not being fast enough to complete the pass and not getting a grip on your opponent to control his weapon either.

For these reasons, the pass is taught only at the highest levels of weapons defence and should be applied with great care.

Choosing your Method

Which method you choose to close the distance depends on your skill level and experience.

For beginners, practicing the outside close is safest.

When you are comfortable with your speed and timing and can finish your partner easily from the outside close, practice the inside close.

If you are very experienced and have an experienced partner, you can also experiment with the pass.

Whichever method you choose, there are a few common principles:

1. Stay as close to your opponent as possible after you close.
2. Focus on taking control of the knife first.
3. Grabbing the knife wielding hand is always preferable to parrying/blocking.
4. Cut off your attacker's view of the knife.
5. Close the distance quickly and smoothly.

6. Never take unnecessary chances or use complicated techniques.
7. Detach yourself from the fear you feel when faced with a weapon.
8. Stay alert but unemotional.
9. Keep a natural demeanour and deceive your opponent.
10. Move suddenly and without warning.

Finishing Techniques

In the above examples, we briefly touched on techniques used for finishing after you close the distance.

Although the methods for closing the distance are only three, the potential numbers of finishing techniques are as vast as the arts we practice.

Once you get close to your opponent, you can use your strongest skills, whether they are striking, kicking, throwing, locking or grappling.

There are no secret weapons or scientific principles.

There is only the simple truth that once you take away your opponent's advantage, you are free to use whatever you are best at.