

“Petty Principles” of Fight Training

Train **mindfully**. Talk to yourself to remind yourself what you are supposed to be paying attention to. Don't move your body faster than your brain can handle. At the beginning this may seem aggravating but the idea is not to do 10,000 reps of a punch and realize it is wrong, or to neglect developing your mental speed. Concentrate hard and make everything *conscious* while training, so that it is ingrained enough to be unconscious when fighting.

Train **carefully**. There is no reason to do things wrong. Sloppiness is mental laziness once you are capable of executing the technique and your conditioning base is built. Yes, I absolutely mean that—if you know how to throw a punch and you start half-assing it towards the end of a workout because your shoulders are burning or whatever—this is simply mental weakness, failure to bear down. Incidentally, you will probably also have one of those “OMFG I'm about to die!” looks on your face, another sign of mental weakness.

Ruthlessly eliminate extraneous motion. This is what **mirror work** as opposed to shadow boxing is for. Structural drills also can help here but they are crutches used to *develop* proprioception, not to substitute for it. Anything that you are not specifically supposed to be moving—DON'T! Save energy, reduce risk of misstep or blow landing poorly, don't create openings, don't allow yourself to be motorset or drawn into your opponent's rhythm. Most importantly DO NOT develop idiosyncratic motions of the head and hands—even though you *believe* them to be random, they are not, and your opponent (or at least his coach) will pick them up very quickly. This is an error that trainees fall into at all levels, so be aware of it. If you are good enough to be melodramatic like Ali or Roy Jones, then you aren't reading this book. For the rest of us, be cool by winning the fight and leave the showboating to someone else. Move your hands and feet enough to overcome inertia and not allow your opponent to draw an easy bead on you—and no more than that until you are ready to strike or required to defend.

Fighting is a **movement discipline**: all fighting arts are specific ways of using your body to accomplish a goal. This makes them similar to dance, yoga, kettlebell training, gymnastics, and so forth. All fighting styles have the added complexity that there are one or more persons trying to disrupt your performance, generally by rendering you unconscious. “Pressure” in a violent confrontation against someone who is determined to hurt you is different than “pressure” in an important tennis match, for example.

Always train in **progressions**. Never be afraid to start way down on the complexity list and work up slowly. During a session and during a period of months or years, DO NOT RUSH these progressions. For example, don't try to learn how to punch faster, harder, from a stance, and at a moving target all at once. Begin standing in place and hitting a stationary target; when that is consistent then add one level of complexity.

There is a correct way to do everything. If you do not know what it is, ask, research, or figure it out on your own. Do not close your mind—decide that you will do everything the best way you know how; if you are taught a better way and can clearly see that this is the case, then integrate the new information into your own.

Always expect and plan for the worst—from yourself as well. Over-compensate in training—intelligently. Expect that you will have your worst day and your opponent will have his best.

DO NOT use heavy gloves, tape or hand wraps, except possibly for a fight. Train bare knuckle as much as possible including partner drills and bag work. If you must wear gloves favor light, open palm MMA style gloves. Wear heavy fully padded boxing gloves only to spar (unless you are preparing for a fight, in which case train with them more often). Gloves, tape, and wraps will make your wrists and hands lazy and weak. They will obscure your ability to determine hand position and striking surface. They will give you a false sense of security and allow you to throw punches that would be ineffective and break your hand if you were fighting bare-knuckle. Bare-knuckle punches can be thrown with gloves on; the converse is not true. Finally, the chains of kettlebell and striking exercises that are the heart of my method cannot be conveniently performed if you must put on and take off gloves and wraps *during* your rounds.