

the self defence manual

foreword by Geoff Thompson

**Martin Dougherty
David Birdsall**

Copyright © David Birdsall and Martin Dougherty, 2003

The rights of David Birdsall and Martin Dougherty to be identified as the authors of this work have been asserted in accordance with sections 77 and 78 of the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988.

No part of this book may be reproduced by any means, nor transmitted, nor translated into a machine language, without the written permission of the publisher.

Summersdale Publishers Ltd
46 West Street
Chichester
West Sussex
PO19 1RP
UK

www.summersdale.com

Printed and bound in Great Britain

ISBN 1 84024 227 2

Photos by Nate Zettle

About the Authors



David Birdsall (left, cheerful) is a qualified sports therapist. As the senior technical coach of Nihon Tai-jitsu GB, which is pending status as governing body for the Nihon tai-jitsu martial art, he teaches self-defence seminars across the United Kingdom. Past experience includes boxing, kick boxing, Wado Ryu karate, and he currently teaches tai-jitsu, ju-jitsu and aiki-jitsu. He has participated in security work at large public venues and conference centres throughout the world for a number of years. This work included venue security, evacuation liaison, front-of-house security, backstage security and personal VIP security at venues.

Martin J. Dougherty (right, surly) freelances in the defence and security fields and has addressed major international conferences on security issues. He trains in Nihon tai-jitsu with David and has studied judo, karate, jeet kune do and ju-jitsu. He is also a fencing instructor. Martin's other publications include novels, games, non-fiction and technical material as well as strategic reports for the defence industry.

A Note on the Photos

The people in the photos are (mostly) not martial artists as such. Most of them are members of various Nihon tai-jitsu clubs or the University of Sunderland Fencing Club who happened to be available when we were taking the photos. This was a deliberate policy on our part – most readers will not be martial artists, so we avoided a martial arts approach to the demonstrations. Only one of our demonstrators holds a black belt; some have never trained in a martial art at all. These are real, ordinary people who have learned to use the techniques mentioned in this book. If they can do it, you can too!

Some of the photos are intended to illustrate a general point. Most demonstrate a specific technique. The choice of ‘aggressor’ and ‘defender’ is not intended in any way to suggest that persons of a particular height, gender, ethnic origin, mode of dress or any other arbitrary characteristic are likely to be attackers, or to be attacked. Note also that all the techniques in this book are *universal*, i.e. they can be used by anyone of any height or build, though common sense suggests that extreme differences in size will make some options unworkable.

Disclaimer

Everything in this book is intended for the use of decent, well-intentioned people interested in preserving their own safety and that of others. The authors are strongly opposed to the use of violence except as a last resort for self-defence purposes. No liability can be accepted for the misuse of the defensive techniques presented in this book. Comments on the use of weapons are intended to facilitate understanding of how an attack might be made and how to defend against it, and should be viewed in that light. Theoretical assailants in the book are generally referred to as men. This reflects the reality that the majority of potential attackers are male. No sexism or other prejudice is implied or should be inferred from any statement in this book.

Lastly, we are not out to put anyone down or to be disrespectful to any martial art or fighting style. We recognise their merits and the long hours of hard training involved. We are well aware that the various martial arts all have a lot to offer – we have trained in many of them! However, we do sincerely believe that for the great majority of people, the methods in this book are the best option.

Dedication

We owe a great debt of thanks to the people that made this work possible:

To our families and friends, who for some reason continue to put up with us when we're difficult to live with.

To the students at the Sunderland and Billingham clubs.

To the people who taught us, trained with us, inspired us, and only occasionally hurt us.

To the people who helped out with the photos and otherwise made the production possible; especially those who came back again and again to help: Craig, Ian, Mary, Mike and Rachel, and the ones who would have been there if they could.

We made it in the end, and it's thanks to you.

Special thanks are owed to two very generous individuals:

To Geoff Thompson, for kind permission to steal his work on the fence.

To Nate Zettle, for photography, advice and the occasional bust lip.

But if we must dedicate this book, then it has to be to the person who needs it. To someone who would take charge of their life and be a little safer if they could. Someone smart enough to know that our world is a dangerous place, and courageous enough to take responsibility for their own safety. Someone who will use our humble book wisely and well, avoiding violence yet prepared to defend against it.

This is the person for whom we wrote this book, and it is to whom it is dedicated.

Who is this person?

It's you – if you want it to be.

Contents

Foreword by Geoff Thompson.....	10
Introduction	12

Part I: First Things First

What is Self-Protection?.....	14
The Right to Go Home Alive.....	15
Self-Defence and the Law.....	18
Self-Defence Myths and Facts.....	35
Self-Protection for Everyone.....	38
Times when you MUST Fight.....	56
Summary.....	57

Part II: Threat Avoidance and Management

Chapter 1: Self-Protection and Personal Safety	59
Self-Protection Begins with the Self.....	59
Cold and Hot Attacks.....	61
The Self-Defence Formula: ADDER.....	61
Awareness.....	64
Fear.....	67
Assertiveness versus Aggression.....	69
Assertiveness Issues.....	72
The Hidden Benefits of Being Prepared.....	81
Training and Reaction.....	84
Summary.....	85
Chapter 2: Avoid!	86
Better Not to Fight At All.....	86
Avoid!.....	87
Threat Avoidance.....	89
Summary.....	92

Chapter 3: Deter!	93
Threat Analysis.....	93
Deterring Cold Attacks.....	95
Deterring Hot Attacks.....	97
Target Hardening for Beginners.....	98
Target Hardening for Vulnerable People.....	102
Summary.....	105

Chapter 4: Defuse!	106
Body Language, Words and Other Signals.....	106
Confrontation Management.....	108
Summary.....	113

Chapter 5: Evade!	114
Personal Space.....	114
The Fence.....	115
Obstacles.....	118
Assistance.....	120
Summary.....	123

Part III: Under Attack

Chapter 1: The Attack	124
What is an Attack?.....	124
The Top Five Physical Assaults.....	125
Recognising the Signs.....	128
What Actually Happens in Fights.....	129
The Battle of the First Salvo.....	132
Summary.....	134

Chapter 2: Respond!	135
The Big Secret.....	135
You Really Can Defend Yourself.....	136
Non-Physical Responses.....	138
Physical Responses.....	142
Ten Basic Rules for Self-Defence.....	142

During an Assault.....	145
After an Assault.....	146
Summary.....	150

Chapter 3: Tactics for Successful Self-Defence.....	152
What You Should Always Do.....	152
What You Should Never Do.....	152
Distractions and Deceptions.....	152
Pre-Emptive Techniques.....	155
Improvised Weapons.....	157
On to the End!.....	161
Dealing with Multiple Attackers.....	162
Summary.....	164

Part IV: Training

Chapter 1: Martial Arts and Self-Defence Classes.....	165
Why Take a Class?.....	165
Finding a Suitable Art or Style.....	167
Choosing a Class or Course.....	169
Summary.....	171

Chapter 2: The Martial Arts.....	172
Summaries of Martial Arts Styles.....	172
Grades, Belts and ‘Licences’.....	175
Clothing and Equipment for Training.....	178
Summary.....	179

Chapter 3: Learning and Training.....	180
Sensible Training.....	180
Reliable Techniques.....	182
Fitness.....	184
Summary.....	190

Part V: Self-Defence Techniques

Chapter 1: The Basics	191
Ready Stance.....	192
Movement and Evasion.....	193
Situational Awareness and Tactical Mobility.....	195
Distance and Entries.....	196
Covers and Parries versus Blocks.....	197
Summary.....	202
Chapter 2: Striking Techniques	203
Principles of Striking.....	204
Using your Hands.....	205
Punches.....	207
Palm-Heel Strikes, Backfists and Hammerfists.....	210
Kicking Techniques.....	212
Elbow Strikes.....	215
Headbutts.....	216
Knees.....	217
Summary.....	219
Chapter 3: Defensive Techniques	220
Defending Yourself Against Grabs and Chokes.....	220
Defending Yourself Against Punches.....	226
Throws and Takedowns.....	229
Defending Yourself on the Ground.....	231
Defending Yourself Against Weapons.....	234
In Extremis.....	240
Targets and How to Exploit Them.....	242
Summary.....	245
Afterword	246

Foreword

It would be fair to say that I have spent the last thirty-odd years of my life studying different methods of self-protection, right from school where the bullies made my days very long and very sad to the present day. I thought that the bullying might end with the last bell of my schooling years; I was wrong. It continued into the work place, the pub bar, the football match, in fact, every aspect of life – hell, even life itself – seemed laced with intimidation. I blamed everyone and everything (even God, who I abandoned on more than one occasion) for my dilemma. Then one day I put my honest head on and admitted that, actually, it was nobody's fault but my own. People bullied me because I let them. Situations intimidated me because I quaked helplessly in my boots and thus encouraged my fears. Life walked over me because I lay down on the floor and let it.

Once I took responsibility for myself and for my place on this spinning planet – and listen in, unless you do take responsibility for your own safety you will always be somebody's whipping boy – things started to turn around, and my habitat and my cohorts suddenly started to take on a healthier hue. I started to get respect from people, because I demanded no less. I developed the art of invisibility; because of my confidence (developed over many years in the forging grounds of hard martial arts), people no longer saw me as a victim.

The big problem for me as a younger man was choosing the right kind of training to prepare me for an unsolicited attack, one that would likely eclipse the formulaic norms of dojo fighting. In my life-long search, I studied many arts – I would go as far as to say most. I even spent ten years working as a nightclub doorman to fine-tune what I had learned. I had hundreds of fights, I damaged a multitude of people who got in my way and at the end of it all, after the murder and mayhem, the punching and stamping, the harm and the hate I came to the same conclusion as the authors of this excellent tome: self defence at its very best does not involve a physical response, rather it is about understanding the (so-called) enemy so that we can avoid him, escape him, verbally dissuade him, loop-hole, posture – anything to avoid a physical response because violence is, and has to be, a very last resort.

An analogy: preparing people to defend themselves is a little like teaching children road safety. We don't instruct our kids in the fine art of

first aid just in case a car hits them, we teach them awareness and the Green Cross Code so that they can avoid it in the first place. Because we all know that once they've been knocked over, it is too late. For most people (even many of the so-called 'trained martial artists') being attacked in the street is like being knocked over by a car: many of the victims are debilitatingly injured and mentally traumatised, most never completely recover. Some of the less fortunate die because of their injuries.

That's what I love about this book. It is not the usual gung-ho, thumb-lock and shoulder throw technique boutique of old; it is a mature, intelligent, comprehensive and life-saving manual on how to avoid becoming the next victim of an unsolicited assault.

As well as covering pre-fight strategies, everything from violent body language to attack precursors, the book also covers what to do if a physical response is called for, with the added and sensible advice that the techniques are unlikely to work unless you spend a long time practising them.

So we have the pre-fight (how to avoid an assailant), the in-fight (the stuff that will work in the street as opposed to in a James Bond movie) and a very comprehensive look at post-fight – how you stand with regard to the law if you should injure your attacker in the course of defending yourself.

There is so much in this book that I could probably write another book just telling you about it. I won't do that. It's enough to say that this is a fabulous book, very well written and researched. I highly recommend both the book and its authors.

You know what they say (whoever 'they' are): 'If you want to stay safe, be informed.' I can think of no better way of being informed than this excellent book.

Geoff Thompson

Coventry England, 2002

Introduction

This is not a book about fighting. Indeed, most of it is about finding ways of not fighting, not having to fight, and (best of all) not being in a situation where there is any threat of violence at all. True, later sections do deal with the mechanics of violent self-defence, and many readers will have already skipped there to see what's on offer. This book, however, is for those whose primary interest is in staying or getting out of trouble *without* violence.

This book is intended for the use of anyone and everyone who goes in harm's way (or who feels that harm may come to visit uninvited). In particular it will be of interest to children, students, women, the elderly and people with occupations that place them at increased risk. Increased-risk occupations include healthcare providers, members of the emergency services, taxi drivers, bar and shop staff, council employees, teachers and anyone else whose occupation takes them out alone or places them in situations where confrontations may occur.

The measures in this book will work for anyone, and everyone can benefit from increased personal security. Even people sure that they can 'handle themselves' are wise to avoid trouble if they can. The unfortunate reality is that violence of any sort can have unexpected and very unpleasant consequences, even if you 'win' the fight. It is truly better not to get involved in violence at all. Most people believe that they have no choice in the matter; either they will be attacked or they won't. Some are certain that it will never happen to them. Both of these views are wrong, as we will show. For now, two facts:

- It *can* happen to you.
- It doesn't have to.

This book asks one thing of you: that you embrace a measure of reality. Nobody is suggesting that you should become paranoid or live in constant fear, but in order to reduce the risk of attack (and you can!), you must first accept that an attack can happen, and that it will be very nasty indeed if it does. In return, this book will show you a series of simple measures that will greatly increase your personal safety.

You will learn not only how to avoid trouble altogether, but how to get out of a confrontation without coming to blows, how to escape from

someone who means you harm, and what you are legally allowed to do to prevent someone from hurting you. Later sections do detail some violent defensive measures you can take, but they are a last resort; part of a package of measures that should prevent it from ever coming to that.

Think of these measures as a series of ever-finer filters. One filter will let some dirt through, but stop most of it. Another catches most of what is left. Our system has five 'layers' of filters. The first layer prevents most situations from becoming a threat. The second nullifies most of what slips through the first, and the third deals with most of what remains. Only a tiny proportion of threats actually reach the fourth and fifth layers of our defences.

By layering defences in this way, you can weed out a huge proportion of potentially dangerous situations. But what are these 'filters'? How do you create them? How do they work?

That is what the rest of the book is about.

Part I: First Things First

What is Self-Protection?

Everyone knows that self-defence is a matter of learning a few simple strikes and grappling techniques so that you can disable or escape from an attacker. Sadly, everyone who knows that is wrong. Self-defence begins with *you*; the process of protecting yourself begins long before a confrontation develops. However, the term has acquired certain connotations that can make its use misleading.

Words like ‘self-defence’ mean different things to different people, so we will draw a distinction between self-defence and self-protection for the sake of clarity.

- ‘Self-defence’ refers to the skills of fighting, evasion and fleeing that are used to thwart an attack that is imminent or already taking place.
- ‘Self-protection’ encompasses many layers, one of which is the act of self-defence. Self-protection also includes alertness, target hardening, confrontation management and a host of other skills used to avoid, deter or prevent attacks – or to deal with them if they do happen.

Self-protection is about acknowledging that there is a risk of attack, weighing it, and acting accordingly. That is not to say that you should be afraid. You have every right not to be. What you should be is *aware*. Aware of the dangers, aware of what you can do about them, aware that you are worth protecting and aware that you know *how* to protect yourself. There are many layers to self-protection. Defeating a physical assault is the final stage in the process of self-protection when all other measures have failed.

Self-protection begins when you take the (rather intimidating) step of admitting that there are people out there who may choose to attack you. From there it is a small step to analysing how, when and why they might do that, and taking steps to reduce the risks. Fighting (or ‘self-defence’) skills, and tools such as rape alarms, fall into the category of back-up plans; they are there if you need them, but it’s much, *much* better not to have to use them.

Alertness Codes

The level of alertness an individual exhibits can be classified according to a colour code that is used by the armed forces and by many self-defence writers. The colour code looks like this:

- **Code White:** Oblivious of threats and totally unprepared for trouble. It is usually obvious you are Code White, and many potential assailants are more likely to attack you if you display this kind of behaviour. You won't see an attack coming, won't be able to react until too late, and your reaction will be panicky. Code White can be caused by preoccupation with other things, alcohol or complacency. Whatever the cause, it can be fatal. Code White is not the place to be, ever.
 - **Code Yellow:** Alert for threats, looking around, conscious of dark shadows, lonely places, dangerous people, yet not stressed by it all. Someone who is Code Yellow will take sensible precautions to preserve their safety, and their preparedness will show; many potential assailants will look elsewhere for a softer target. If you are attacked while Code Yellow, you will react more effectively and won't be caught by surprise. Code Yellow is the state of habitual awareness we should all cultivate until it requires no effort to maintain.
 - **Code Orange:** Under threat, ready to respond. Suspicious or threatening circumstances will cause alert people to move up to Code Orange; they are in balance, ready to back off, fight or run as needed. Code Orange preparations can be quite subtle and can be concealed, or they may be quite open to act as a deterrent. Either way, someone who is Code Orange is ready to react if necessary, but calmly, and without doing anything to precipitate violence in a situation that might yet be salvaged.
 - **Code Red:** Violence is imminent. Someone who is Code Red is ready. Their senses are tuned for the first threatening movement or the crossing of their defence threshold, whereupon they will have no choice but to fight or run. Code Red is tiring and stressful. Many people go Code Red in response to threats that aren't very serious – often straight from White to Red. Experience and understanding allows an individual to maintain a less stressful Orange or Yellow posture until there is a real threat, yet remain just as able to respond.
-
-

The Right to Go Home Alive

You are a unique individual. You may be pretty dissatisfied with some aspects of your life, but it's yours. You have the right to go on living it; to make the best of your life that you can. Nobody has the right to intrude into that life or to take it away from you.

When someone goes out in search of a victim, they are usually looking for just that. Not a fair fight, not even a major risk. They're looking for someone they can frighten, intimidate and hurt with relative impunity. Those young men across the street may be good people, but it's equally possible that they are looking you over, trying to decide if you are a victim. And believe it or not, you do have some choice as to whether you become one. One of the key concepts in self-protection can be explained by the 'crime triangle'. For any crime to take place you need:



If any of the three is removed, then no crime can take place. An attacker, of course, brings himself and his willingness to attack you to the situation. You have at least some control over the other two sides of the triangle. By your actions and habits you can ensure that a potential attacker is presented with few opportunities to carry out his attack. If at all possible, you should try to ensure that the 'crime triangle' remains incomplete by implementing the avoidance, deterrence and evasion measures discussed later in this book. Simply put, this means that if you aren't there, you can't be attacked. Even if you and a potential attacker are both in the same place, there may not be an opportunity to attack you on the terms that he wants.

Depriving him of an opportunity can be as simple as making sure you can see him, not turning your back, being aware of your surroundings or determinedly maintaining your personal space.

Even if the triangle is completed, an attack is by no means a certainty. Whether you are subjected to violence or not depends upon his willingness to attack you. You do have a small measure of control over this as you can manipulate the situation or his perception of it to reduce the possibility of attack – but only if you know how to do it!

- Often the deciding factor in whether or not you get attacked is how you handle the situation.

For example, if you are facing a threatening situation and you behave like a victim – that is, you show fear and generally fit into the potential assailant’s ‘script’ for events – then you are more likely to be attacked than someone who acts calmly and confidently and breaks the ‘script’. It might seem that faced with three tough-looking thugs, you have little choice in the matter, but in fact you do.

Preparation plays an important part. Knowing that you have at least some idea of what to do when under attack can be a great help when putting on an Oscar-winning performance of confident assurance. But there are other factors too.

A large proportion of attacks occur while the victim is doing something that they know isn’t very smart. Shortcuts down dark alleys are never a good idea, yet people take them. Sometimes the victim realises that a situation is sliding out of control, but is afraid that walking away would mean accepting derision and ridicule from the potential assailant. Later, they are treated in hospital for injuries that make a few harsh words seem rather trivial. (The authors have, unfortunately, both been involved in a certain amount of ‘unscheduled field research’ and can assure you that harsh words are *always* rather trivial when compared to physical injury!)

Most lamentable of all: someone who knows an attack is about to take place chooses not to assume a defensive posture (mental or physical) because they are embarrassed to, or because they simply cannot believe that this is happening to them. Caught flat-footed and mentally out of gear, they are an easy target. These things happen all the time, yet they are so easily avoided.



Cutting through this alley saves a whole two minutes. Is it worth it?

It is easy to become drawn into the attacker's chosen 'script' for events, or to find yourself being railroaded into going along with something that does not feel right. People sometimes place themselves in extreme danger simply because they are embarrassed to cross the road, assume a defensive stance, ask for help, or just tell a stranger that they are uncomfortable and would like to be left alone.

In order to assure your safety, you must not be embarrassed to take simple defensive measures. Most decent people will respect you for bluntly stating that you don't want to go with them – and most would be upset and apologetic at having made you nervous. Thugs might not be pleased, but they will probably decide to look for an easier victim, and if they do decide to go for you, at least your position is better than if you'd let them take you where they wanted to go.

There are less obvious alternatives to the fists-up fighting stance, which will be discussed later, but for now remember that assuming a fighting stance is *not* overreacting if you perceive a real threat to your safety. Anyone who wants to make fun of you for being ready to defend yourself is welcome to; they are either an idiot or a potential victim. Your life is too precious to be risked because of what someone else might think of what you are doing.

Rage leads to stupidity – never lose your temper. However, an edge of irritation or annoyance can give you the courage to break out of a situation or to act decisively. You are a special, unique, worthwhile person. The idea that someone might try to take that away from you should be enough to provoke some anger. A healthy annoyance at your potential assailant should give you the courage to assume a defensive stance and make it very clear that you are no victim. They may still try, of course, but the fact that an attacker will have to pay for interfering in your life might just be enough to make them back off. You have the right to go home alive and unhurt. Assert it.

Self-Defence and the Law

Many people have no real idea of what is, and what is not, legal in self-defence. Many of those who do 'know' are wrong. The law is a complex business and is subject to interpretation in a manner that sometimes defies the understanding of laypeople. However, legal cases and statements by prominent legal officials have made certain things very clear, and that is enough for our purposes.

Fighting is not legal. Exchanging blows outside a pub or a football stadium over a difference of opinion or an unkind word is against the law – nor is it acceptable conduct in a civilised society. Self-defence is a different matter. In an ideal world it would simply not be necessary, but this is not an ideal world. Sometimes violence is thrust upon us, and the only option is to meet it in kind. Therefore, the law recognises that sometimes an individual may have to resort to violent means to preserve their safety, and that within certain limits this is acceptable conduct, both legally and morally.

The authors strongly advocate that everyone should obtain at the very least some basic self-defence training; however, we do not suggest that anyone should, or needs to, ‘learn to fight’.

- Self-defence is not the same thing as fighting.

Fighting is mutual combat; self-defence involves repelling an assault or protecting another individual. Winning the fight is a means to an end, not a goal in itself. Your goal is to escape the situation without being hurt, not to batter someone. Once you have an alternative to continued violence, you should take it! To put that another way, your goal is to:

- Create a window of opportunity so you can escape.

Any self-defence or martial arts training you undertake should be directed at this goal, and any self-defence actions you take should serve the same purpose. The only reason for continuing to fight is the lack of an alternative. This is not merely our opinion; it is also the gist of self-defence law in Britain.

Your Rights and Duties

Firstly, and most importantly for our purposes, you do have the right to defend yourself and the people around you, using force if necessary. You also have the right to protect property, but this is not a factor here for reasons that will become clear as we progress.

The law recognises that a person who is under attack, or honestly believes that he or she – or someone nearby – is about to be attacked, has the right to use ‘reasonable force’ to prevent or halt the attack. To quote Lord Griffith (1988): ‘If no more force is used than is reasonable to repel the attack, such force is not unlawful and no crime is committed.’

The amount of force that is 'reasonable' will be discussed shortly. The important factor is that, subject to certain limitations:

- It is not a crime to defend yourself using reasonable force.

The law also recognises that a person under attack cannot precisely calculate the absolute minimum force required to halt the attack, nor can an ordinary civilian be expected to apply such minimum force effectively.

- There is no 'Principle of Minimum Force'.

The law recognises that it is not wise to wait for an assailant to actually attack you. As long as you have been given very clear reason to believe that an attack is imminent, and you cannot otherwise resolve the situation (say by withdrawing), then you may attack pre-emptively. Similarly, you do not need to be attacked yourself to be justified in responding with violence. If an attack is underway or is obviously imminent on any person nearby, you are legally allowed to use violence to prevent or to halt this attack.

- Striking first is not a crime.

Again, quoting Lord Griffith (1988), a person 'about to be attacked does not have to wait for his assailant to strike the first blow or fire the first shot, circumstances may justify a pre-emptive strike'.

However, if a pre-emptive strike takes place you are not allowed to strike maliciously or vindictively to get revenge after the danger has passed.

Most street attackers throw huge, slow punches. If you are alert you may be able to snap a fast jab into his face before his attack gets going.

