

# TEN ELEMENTS FOR MARTIAL MASTERY

The “10 Elements for Martial Mastery” is a continual process for improvement. There are 3 phases in this process. This first phase relates to the “physical” understanding of the 10 Elements. It concentrates on providing an understanding of how to apply each of the elements. At Phase two the physical is understood and then the 10 Elements are applied to the “mental” aspect of training. Phase three is the development of the “metaphysical”. No thought or effort is necessary when applying the 10 Elements. Phase three is the highest stage and as such takes years to reach and master. Students must continuously train themselves to understand each phase of the 10 elements. Only then can they progress to the next phase.

1. CONCENTRATION / FOCUS
2. POSTURE / BALANCE
3. BREATHING / KI HAP
4. TEMPO / TIMING / GRACE
5. SPIRIT / ATTITUDE

6. MUSCLE CONTROL / COORDINATION
7. HIP / CENTER
8. SPEED / SNAP
9. POWER / INTENSITY
10. FINE TUNING / UNDERSTANDING

## 1. CONCENTRATION / FOCUS

Concentration and Focus essentially mean the same thing. So clarification of these two terms must come first.

**Concentration:** The complete attention on the technique or pattern at hand.

**Focus:** The ability to direct the block, strike and kick to a target.

Concentration must occur first in order to effectively execute a technique or movement. Concentration because one must mentally know what action is to be performed. Thought becomes action. As one advances this process becomes more and more subconscious, almost automatic.

Focus is then a part of that action. Focus is required for proper outcome of the action or movement. Without proper knowledge of focusing the technique, the action will be less effective and the chance of a successful action will be less.

The process is to first become aware of what the action, movement, response, etc. is before execution of a properly focused technique.

## 2. POSTURE / BALANCE

**Posture:** Keeping the spine straight with the hips aligned underneath to allow for the proper execution of technique and stance.

**Balance:** Maintaining a center of gravity below the abdomen at all times for the proper execution of technique and stance.

Second after knowing what to do and where to strike is posture/balance. Posture and Balance are subsets of each other and must coexist with each other for proper execution of technique. If posture is not correct, balance is also not correct and vice versa. Proper posture allows the upper body to execute from a relaxed posture. Tensing of any part of the upper body will slow down or hinders execution

Balance involves 3 factors: the width of the stance; center of gravity and proper posture.

Balance when Striking or Blocking requires a stable

stance and a lowered center of gravity.

Balance when Kicking requires a stable center of gravity and a relaxed posture to act as a counter balance determined by the height of the kick in relation to your flexibility.

Without proper posture and balance, the technique will be ineffective due to the hindrance of speed and power.

## 3. BREATHING / KI HAP

**Breathing:** The proper inhalation and exhalation during a technique.

**Ki Hap:** Vocalizing the exhalation at the point of impact, for the absorption of an impact and for psychological intimidation.

Breathing and ki hap are two more elements which must also work hand-in-hand.

Proper breathing develops the proper hardening of the body required during all phases of a technique. Breathing or breath control originates from the abdomen. The abdomen should achieve a relaxed state of tension through proper breathing.

Proper breath control will relax the muscles on inhalation and systematically harden the muscles during exhalation resulting in complete hardening of the body at the moment of impact and then immediately relaxing upon completion.

That moment of impact is vocalized by the Ki hap. The only difference between proper breathing and a Ki hap is sound. Every exhalation at full force is executed the same whether a Ki hap is applied or not.

There are three reasons for executing a Ki hap: Vocal harassment, Systematic hardening of the muscles of the body, and to unleash the total power of the body into the technique.

Lastly, breathing lends itself in the development of the next element of Tempo, Timing, and Grace.

## 4. TEMPO / TIMING / GRACE

**Tempo:** The rate of speed or pace of movement through a technique or pattern.

## TEN ELEMENTS FOR MARTIAL MASTERY (cont)

**Timing:** The regulation of the speed (pace) with which a movement is performed so as to produce the most effective results

**Grace:** The beauty (aesthetics) of form, composition, movement or expression and the ease of it's execution.

Tempo, timing, and grace while potentially difficult enough on their own merits, must be consolidated here because they all apply to the aesthetics of a movement. While aesthetics itself is not importance of a technique, it's execution in relation to tempo, timing, and grace are important.

While tempo can be developed through the use of devices, such as a metronome, it is important that one learns to develop their own internal tempo. This can be developed through one's own breathing. Inhaling to start an action and exhaling to complete the action.

Timing requires that the entire body is coordinated from beginning to the end of an action. Ensuring that the focus of power of a technique completes at the moment of impact along with proper breathing, posture, balance and focus.

Grace is not so much the aesthetics of an action, but rather the ease and smoothness of the action that still produce the desired results. Coordination of the action using tempo, timing, and breathing to relax and harden the muscles will work to develop grace.

### 5. SPIRIT / ATTITUDE

**Spirit:** The frame of mind, disposition or mood (intensity) demonstrated during the performance of the technique and pattern.

**Attitude:** The manner of acting, feeling or thinking that demonstrates one's spirit.

When we talk about spirit, we mean Martial Spirit. Martial Spirit is to never concede defeat whether against an opponent or yourself. Failure was not even considered. Spirit here then means the desire to push yourself beyond your limits, to go a little bit further than you did before. To no longer think TRY, but DO. To commit yourself fully to the task or technique at hand and only be satisfied once its is completed.

Your Attitude then is one that demonstrates that spirit. To be ready and willing to go that extra mile, to push yourself beyond what's comfortable, to be better than before. A good word that sums up attitude is PRIDE.

### 6. MUSCLE CONTROL / COORDINATION

**Muscle Control:** The proper hardening of the striking surfaces of the body in order to withstand the amount of force being exerted upon them at impact. Conversely softening the same muscles for quick retraction or extension of a technique.

**Coordination:** Is defined as the harmonious functioning of parts for effective results.

Muscle Control is the ability to make the body obey the mind. But the mind first must know how the body must work. When worked with the first 5 elements movements will become better defined. Controlling muscle

movement requires training the muscles in different ways. Slow training to understand how each muscle works to effect the movement and which muscles need to be further developed for easier movement. Fast training to learn how to initiate the movement quickly without telegraphing and conversely how to stop the movement quickly and at the correct point. Soft training to understand how relaxation is used in the execution of the movement. Tension training to develop the power at the end point of the movement. A technique I call "Walk-thru" training to understand the tempo, timing and grace of the movement. Stance training to gain understanding of how the stance is utilized throughout the movement. And lastly, Continuous Movement training to understand how the ending of one movement is the beginning of the next.

Coordination is the mate of Muscle Control. Without coordination, movements are mechanical, out of time, stiff and ineffective. Coordination is the controlling of different muscle movements to create a whole, single effective movement.

In the words of Grand Master Estioko, "Maximum efficiency, minimum effort".

### 7. HIP / CENTER

**Hip:** The generator and controller of speed and power.

**Center:** The core of internal energy.

The hip is the generator and controller of all movement and the center of your stability. The relationship of the hip to the strike, block or kick is like that of the whip handle to the tip. The whip cannot lash out until the handle is put into play. Then the effectiveness of the strike is then dependent on the retraction of that same handle. The control of that handle effects both the delivery and strike of that whip. So too like the whip handle, the hip must generate and initiate the movement and then retract the strike back to "snap" the technique.

The center is the point that controls the effective use of the hip. The center is also related to balance, breathing and ki hap. The center's stabilizing effect helps maintain balance, and all breathing and ki hap emanates from the center. All of these elements effect or are effected by the center.

Typically the center is a point 2-3" below your navel. A center that is too high, destabilizes the foundation resulting in a loss of power. A center too low, over stabilizes the foundation resulting in slower movement and less speed and snap.

### 8. SPEED / SNAP

**Speed:** Quick or rapid movement with control.

**Snap:** The result of quick or rapid movement.

Speed is the ability to deliver a technique quickly, to the target with control. Speed is developed through the use of the hip and muscle control. The hip and strike acting in the same manner as a whip produces "snap".

Speed and snap both require relaxation, hip and muscle control to be effective. You must be relaxed throughout

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the entire movement tensing only at the point of impact and then immediately relaxing again to retract.

Speed is generated by the hip initiating the motion which provides the strike with its momentum to continue to the target without “telegraphing” its intent.

Snap is the result of the strike tensing at the point of impact and then immediately relaxing for the retraction. The action of the hip of launching the strike and then retracting causes the snap effect.

### 9. POWER / INTENSITY

**Power:** The capacity to exert physical force or energy with control.

**Intensity:** The amount of mental and physical energy being applied.

Power like speed and snap is also generated by the hip. But, real power is not determined by how strong you are, but by how you apply the technique. While power like speed and snap is initiated by the hip, it is the application of the entire body working in concert with the strike that achieves real power. In essence, at the point of impact it is the entire body locking and driving at that single instant that produce power.

Intensity is the focusing of energy into an action, whether physical or mental. Intensity stems from spirit and attitude. Intensity is developed by combining the correct attitude with martial spirit. Intensity is using 110% effort to increase the power of physical action or mental thought. Intensity helps to increase the power when physical strength has reached its maximum.

### 10. FINE TUNING / UNDERSTANDING

**Fine Tuning:** Fine tuning of every aspect of a technique and pattern. Examples of Fine Tuning are: Returning to the point of origin of a Hyung; Proper chambering of a punch, strike, block, or kick; Control of a weapon in a self defense situation; etc.

**Understanding:** Understanding of the application of the techniques being applied. In Japanese it is called, “Bunkai”. It is the “why” of a technique.

Fine Tuning actually begins on your first Tang Soo Do lesson. Fine tuning is the attention to the little details. The striving to make your movements better than before. It is learning about aesthetics of movement to develop your Art. It is learning how to make your techniques effective and to develop your fighting and self defense. It is learning about you to develop yourself.

Understanding is the final stage of learning techniques. Once all of the previous elements are in place, understanding of what those movement mean and how to apply them only works to solidify the technique. True understanding can only occur once all of the previous elements are in place. With even one element missing, full understanding cannot happen.

While Fine Tuning starts at the first Tang Soo Do lesson, understanding cannot occur until all of the other elements have been realized.