

One Step Sparring

Why it's important and tips to improve.



Master A Slater 6th DAN

One Step Sparring - Why it's important and tips to improve.

The definition of one step sparring is a counterattack against an oncoming attack. In most cases, especially at beginner level, this is a step through punch. However as you become more experienced one step sparring can take many forms, including defending against kicks and other strikes.

Why practise one step sparring? Some martial artists say it's not a realistic exercise to spend time on as who attacks someone and leaves their arm out whilst they have the free choice of counters? Time and space are a luxury in martial arts and one step sparring is not particularly realistic of an attack from someone outside. So why practise?

As an instructor this is why I teach and spend time on one-step sparring:

- To learn distance
- To practise stances, blocks, kicks and strikes
- To learn timing
- To improve stepping technique
- To practise reaction time
- To practise decision making
- To improve coordination

One step sparring is a drill designed to teach all of the above and more. As you progress through the ranks this drill should become faster, more fluent, more powerful and more accurate. As a black belt it needs to be done with realism.

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Your physical and mental approach to one step sparring depends on your level. Beginners are happy simply to avoid the attack while blue belts may start to avoid and retaliate with confident counters. Black belts may practise with left or right attacks and from different stances. There are no limits on what Instructors can do with the format of one step sparring.

For more advanced students it allows you to apply the techniques you have learnt in your patterns and put them into a realistic situation. Also to improve on your kicking techniques and concentrate on hitting those vital targets. It also allows you to apply pressure to your partner and push that comfort zone and find out what works for you.

One step sparring is a really valuable tool for instructors to use and great to drill students with. Here are some tips and help when working on your one step.

TIPS & THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

- **Understand open and closed side.** Any attack to the open side is always more dangerous as you run the risk of being attacked with the other hand and leg. Also attack fast and accurately if moving to this side of the body.

- **Grabbing Arms.** If you grab your opponents punching arm make sure you do something with it. Many people just grab and let go. Either put a lock on, use it as a balance or grab on tightly. Just do something!

- **Remember to finish.** One vital way to make your one step more realistic is to ensure once you have delivered the final strike you are safe. This means stepping away from your partner quickly to get to a safe distance where they can't kick or strike you. Also into a stance where if they attack again you can defend.

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- **Always think would the technique actually work?** Lots of one step sparring techniques are not realistic. Like we mentioned above no one is going to let you hit them while they stand still. So attack fast, move quickly and finish. There is no need for techniques to be long and have a lot of moves. In fact the opposite.
- Always end your sequence. Always step back and get safe. If you can do this in training you are more likely to if you ever need to use it outside. Be mindful.
- Different methods. Remember there are so many ways to do one step sparring. Be adventurous and vary them.

Realisume is the key

