

Topic #1 – What Should a Post Black Belt Curriculum Consist of?

The "Black Belt" Terminology is not used exclusively in the martial arts. For example, Six Sigma, a business management strategy, uses belts to rate those certified - with black belt referring to the highest belt that one can achieve. Many have referred to the black belt as a metaphor for excellence in life. One can be a "black belt" chef or a "black belt" taxi cab driver. The term black belt can simply refer to those who excel in any field. The question that remains is, "How do we, as master and grandmaster instructors, maintain the honor, dignity, prestige, and reputation of THE BLACK BELT in the martial arts?" Remember, after achieving the black belt, many go on to believe that they are philosophers, psychologist, life therapist, etc... They sometimes dole-out advice to other students on life matters that is damaging at worse and wrong at best. For the post-black belt level to be a creditable area of study, the question must be asked as to, "what should be a post-black belt learning curriculum"? Let's discuss.

Topic #2 – Self-Defense and the Law in Martial Arts (Taken from A Black Belt Magazine Article March 2019)

In Spider-Man, Uncle Ben told Peter Parker, "With great power comes great responsibility." The fact that the statement originates from a comic-book character doesn't make it any less true. It's especially applicable to the martial arts and the use of deadly force.

Deadly force is the most serious issue you can confront. The martial arts are based on the premise that force may be necessary to protect human life, which is why so many techniques empower even an unarmed person to kill an attacker easily.

Civilized society, out of necessity, enacted rules to govern such conduct, and it's in your best interest to understand them before you use them.

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Many rumors, misconceptions and falsehoods get tossed about by martial artists while discussing deadly force and self-defense. On this issue, engaging in guesswork is dangerous, for the improper use of deadly force can result in the double tragedy of the imprisonment of one party and the death of another.

The purpose of this post is to provide a basic framework for understanding the way that the law views deadly force in the context of self-defense.

Self-Defense Laws: Rules and Regulations

Much of the confusion that surrounds the law of self-defense stems from the fact that it differs from state to state and country to country. Although the statutes have much in common, they can vary significantly.

For simplicity, this post will address the views held by the majority of states. There's no guarantee that your state follows all, or any, of the rules that will be discussed — which is why you should review your local laws before taking action. The easiest way to read the statutes that apply to you is to visit the website of your state legislature.

Self-Defense Laws: Definitions and Situations

“Deadly force” refers to force that’s intended, or known by the person using it, to be capable of causing death or serious bodily injury. “Nondeadly force” is the term for all other types of force. While nondeadly force is permitted in many self-defense scenarios, deadly force is justified only in the most extreme circumstances.

Before resorting to any level of force, even nondeadly force, certain circumstances must first exist. In general, you must have the reasonable belief that force is immediately necessary to prevent the other person from unlawfully causing you physical harm. If someone hurls insults at you but shows no signs of physical aggression, there is no legal justification for using physical force against him. You must have a reasonable belief that the other person’s conduct is unlawful.

If a police officer is performing a lawful arrest on you, you typically have no right to self-defense. In general, you’re not allowed to use force to resist an arrest by a peace officer, even if the arrest is unlawful. However, some states — including Texas, Tennessee and Arizona — permit the use of force in self-defense if the officer uses more force than is necessary to make the arrest.

You must have a reasonable belief that the other person poses an immediate physical threat. If he’s shouting threats at you but shows no immediate intent to act on them, you’re not justified in using force. On the other hand, most states hold that if he raises a clenched fist as if to strike you or lunges violently toward you, his actions represent an immediate physical threat.

You must reasonably believe that immediate action is necessary to defend yourself against the threat. If a person threatens to take violent actions at some point in the future but shows no signs of immediate violence, there’s no justification for using force. The amount of force used must be reasonable given your understanding of the circumstances at the time it’s used. If the aggressor shoves you while you’re in line at the ballpark, you’re not justified in breaking his arm.

The right to use force in self-defense lasts only as long as the threat lasts. If a person begins making threats of immediate violence toward you but calms down and shows no further signs of violence, you have no justification to use force.

Force may not be used in response to verbal provocations alone. If a man in a bar asks you to step outside to resolve a dispute, you can’t punch him in the face.

You’re generally not justified in using force against another when you’re the one who did the provoking. You cannot dare someone to hit you and then claim it as justification for self-defense.

If an attacker abandons the confrontation or clearly communicates an intent to do so, your right to use force against him stops. If someone sucker-punches you and then flees the scene, you can’t track him down and pummel him.

However, the right to use force stops only when the conflict has ended. The attacker must have clearly abandoned the confrontation. If he makes a “strategic retreat” to gain a more advantageous position to continue his assault, he hasn’t abandoned the confrontation, and you retain the right to use force to protect yourself.

Self-Defense Laws: Deadly Force

Generally speaking, deadly force is justified in situations in which you're justified in using nondeadly force against another person in self-defense and you reasonably believe that it's immediately necessary to prevent him from causing you death or serious bodily injury.

Most states hold that you're justified in using it to protect a third person if, under the circumstances as you reasonably believe them to be, you would have been legally justified in using deadly force if you were that third person and you reasonably believe that intervention is immediately necessary to protect him or her. For example, if you believe you're witnessing a murder, most states hold that you're justified in using deadly force against the attacker.

The use of deadly force in the protection of property is prohibited in most states. However, it can be justified in some circumstances when the theft of property is involved. For example, if an armed robber threatens you with immediate death or serious bodily injury, the use of deadly force is justified. On the other hand, in a close call with a pickpocket who places you in no reasonable fear of serious bodily injury or death, deadly force isn't permitted.

Some states, such as Nebraska and Texas, allow the use of deadly force to protect property from the immediate commission of certain crimes such as burglary or robbery. However, even in such situations, it's justified only if the use of nondeadly force would expose you or others to a substantial risk of death or injury.

Self-Defense Laws: Duty to Retreat

Many states have ruled that a person may use deadly force only in situations in which there's no opportunity to retreat beforehand. Alaska, Connecticut, Delaware, Hawaii, Massachusetts, Maine, North Dakota, Nebraska, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York and Pennsylvania are among them.

This duty typically doesn't require retreat within your residence when you've been threatened with death or serious bodily injury. In states that don't have an explicit statutory duty to retreat, important issues may still arise concerning the opportunity to retreat.

This question often involves the factors that are considered in determining the reasonableness of the belief that deadly force was immediately necessary. If you could have easily fled the scene of the attack rather than resorting to deadly force, it becomes highly questionable whether such force was immediately necessary.

Self-Defense Laws: Common Sense

The most potent tool in your arsenal is common sense. An oft-quoted maxim in martial arts schools is, The best block of all is to not be there. The same wisdom holds true in the legal arena.

The legal justifications discussed in this article come into play only after an altercation has begun. By avoiding risky situations, you minimize the likelihood that violent force will be necessary. If nothing happens, no explanation — and no defense attorney — will be needed.

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Topic #3 - The 1- and 6-inch Punching Concept verses Transit Striking

Over the last fifty years there have been a lot of debate and controversy over the legitimacy of the 1- and 6-inch Punching Concept that is one of the cornerstones of the Jeet Kune Do martial arts system. In our Sunday's discussion, we **WILL NOT** discuss the legitimacy of the 1- and 6-inch punch; but only the tenants of concept as it relates to transit striking and its effectiveness from a combative standpoint.