

Practical hints and guidance for sword owners

Stopping distance training

We often train our bodies to be able to swing the sword towards the target be it imaginary or something tangible like bamboo or plastic bottles but I think it is just as important to train your stopping distance. Not only will this help you to stop the dreaded overswing which we're pretty much all guilty of at some points, but it will open up the multi cut patterns to you much more. Being able to stop the sword quickly after youve cut a target means that you can be shifting the sword towards the second target that much quicker. Anyway, I have been asked about this now by a couple of people because the overswing is something we all go through when we start cutting and for me at least, unless you make a concerted and conscious effort to control and refine your cuts it will become harder and harder to train out overswing the further you progress as a cutter. So, here are a few pointers that can help you with stopping distance.

Correct grip is paramount for stopping distance.

The correct grip on the sword is essential for controlling it. Both te no uchi and the distance between your hands will play a massive role in helping you to stop the blade. Basically put, if you have the correct grip on the sword and you keep your arms and wrists in the right position throughout the cut then you will find that when you tell it to stop, it will do so that much easier.

A Suburito is great for building muscles and more strength means less effort and less chance of injury.

The Suburito (literally, sword for suburi) when pulled down to its basics is essentially a large heavy wooden sword. They come in all sorts of shapes and sizes, they are top heavy and when used carefully and consistently are useful for training the muscles that youll need to control your stopping distance. Having said that, they are only a small part of the whole. Use them of course but dont think that simply training every day with them will fix your cuts. Training with them every day will help build your cutting muscles, but swapping back to your blade is just as big a part of this as any other. Although it has been said that technique trumps strength when it comes to practically everything including avoiding injury, and I agree, I have personally found a Suburito to be a great help. ** Article here **

If you're practicing stopping the sword, stop putting so much force into your cuts.

This is a tricky one because only you will know how much force is too much force and the best way to find this out is to simply practice. I've bounced a lot of bottles trying to figure out how much or rather how little force I can get away with using. But if you put too much force into every cut you will end up injuring yourself. Start off slower and work your way slowly upwards until you get to where you need to be. You're not in a rush.

Remember that you're training stopping distance and so if you want the sword to stop at a certain point, putting extra effort into swinging the sword is simply setting yourself up for failure. Do not set yourself up for failure, it's bad form. Dont work against the cut, control the cut from start to finish. You can build up your speed as you progress. If you're worried about tachikaze, I have found that good technique, a quiet practice area as well as a sword with bohi are far more important than the speed of the cut. As a side note, if you can get tachikaze with one sword but not another, maybe its the sword. Cheap swords with thinly and unevenly carved bo-hi are murder to get to sing.

Practical hints and guidance for sword owners

Don't cut up against anything that could damage your sword

Never train stopping distance up against solid objects. Practice up against a cuttable target. despite what you may think, the possibility of hitting something that will potentially damage your sword will not make you better at not hitting it, it will only increase stress and negatively impact your performance. I suppose that this is not the case when it comes to using bokken or suburito but I still think it's better avoided. Thats gotta be a judgement call on your half though. When it comes to metal swords, only put cuttable things in front of it.

Dry cutting and cutting a target shouldn't, but will affect the practical application of your technique

What I am saying here is that the swing you make without a target is not the same as the swing you make when you are trying to cut a target, but it should be. The psychological impact that having a target in front of you is easily demonstrated here as well. Using the same technique that you have been practicing, put a bottle or a mat or whatever you are used to cutting on the stand and use the same motion to cut it. If your cut was different from the ones you have been practicing without targets then you're exactly like me and the vast majority of cutters. It's just interesting to note the way that your technique changes when it thinks it has to try extra hard to make a cut happen. Chances are you tensed up, the swing was way more forceful than it needed to be and your stopping distance suffered. It's not easy to shake that response but it will fade given time and practice.

Everyone gets bored

When you get bored of practice, simply stop. When you get bored, you get lazy, lazy leads to fatigue and fatigue to poor technique and poor technique to the dark side.. or something like that. This will become poor technique which you are training in without even knowing it. Get bored or tired? Stop. That goes for cutting as well although quite how you could get bored is beyond me, getting tired I can remember very well. :) It's easier to pull muscles when they're tired and you're not focused as well and thats a pain quite literally and because you wont be able to pick up a sword for the next few weeks. youch. I speak from experience.

So there are a few pointers that should give you something to mull over when you next cut. Getting the sword moving is fairly easy, getting it moving correctly isn't so hard when you're trying hard enough, but stopping that sword? When was the last time you thought about that? Always give stopping distance some consideration because you will become a better cutter because of it.

Unique solution ID: #1269

Author: Shad - The Samurai Workshop

Last update: 2014-11-02 13:54