

# EXERCISE & TRAINING TECHNIQUES

## Balance, Coordination and Dexterity

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For combat fitness programs it is useful to choose exercises that place particular focus on balance, coordination and dexterity. In combat, it is critically important to be able to maintain your balance and manipulate objects with your hands in high-stress situations. Furthermore, you may be operating at night, in rough terrain or bad weather. Therefore, a high level of athletic coordination is critical for the combat athlete.

Many people's experience playing sports as children has reinforced a myth that certain people are born more coordinated than others and that there is little that can be done to change that. Genetics and natural ability are not nearly as important as most people believe. It is very possible for anyone to dramatically increase their coordination and athletic ability through training, practice and playing sports.

Martial arts training provides the same benefits as sports while also preparing you for unarmed combat on the battlefield and helping build an aggressive, fighter's

mindset. Martial arts began as combative arts designed to help warriors win on the battlefield. Over time, many traditions moved away from the practical combat focus and transformed into more stylized disciplines for the purpose of hobby, sport or personal development. Recent trends in "mixed martial arts" have in some way returned to the original focus on practical fighting. However, modern mixed martial arts are in some cases still built around athletic competitions and require some modification for combat purposes.

One of the best options for martial arts training is to combine elements of modern mixed martial arts with elements of the original, ancient, combative martial arts. Almost all of the ancient combative arts incorporated weapons training. While we no longer use ancient weapons on the battlefield today, training with ancient weapons (the long stick in particular) still remains one of the most effective fitness tools for developing balance, coordination, dexterity, speed and endurance.

# STICK TRAINING

## Benefits of Martial Arts Fitness

When building balance, coordination and dexterity for functional movement, it is often best to train as many attributes at one time as possible, in order to replicate the demands of real combat. Stick training simultaneously improves balance, coordination, dexterity, endurance, strength, agility, foot speed, hand speed and grip strength. Stick training traces its roots to traditional martial arts systems of ancient warrior cultures such as the Spartans, Samurai and Vikings. Nearly all warrior cultures employed stick or spear training as a foundation for fitness and the fighting arts. There are many benefits of stick training for the modern combat athlete as well, including the following:

**ENHANCED COMBAT SHOOTING:** The movements used in martial arts stick training are the same movements used in combat shooting. For example, pivoting and striking with the stick uses the same muscles needed to rapidly pivot with the pistol or rifle to engage targets to the sides or rear. The hand speed, control, grip strength and shock absorption needed to strike with the stick carry over to help you manipulate a pistol or rifle faster, more precisely and control the recoil after firing.

**ENHANCED SELF-DEFENSE:** The movements used in martial arts stick training are also the same movements used in other self-defense and martial arts techniques. Learning to move quickly and smoothly with the stick will improve your skill and coordination when wielding a knife or tactical baton. Stick training will build your speed and power for performing strikes, throws and joint manipulations in empty-hand fighting.

**OVERLOAD TRAINING:** Because the stick is long, heavy and challenging to wield, practicing moving and fighting with the stick will provide a degree of “overload training” for weapons manipulation. Essentially, after getting used to manipulating the stick, manipulating the rifle, pistol, knife or baton will feel very easy in comparison.

**LOW-IMPACT TOTAL BODY TRAINING:** Stick training is one of the most versatile training systems for the combat athlete because it builds many skills and attributes simultaneously. Nearly every muscle is taxed when conducting stick drills, including smaller stabilizer muscles and the muscles in the hands and feet. In addition, stick drills place less strain on the joints than running or rucking.

# STICK TRAINING

## Fundamentals

When stood on its end, the stick should come somewhere between your armpit and your eyes. While it is possible to use a longer or shorter stick, this height range will provide the greatest versatility. You may also choose to use a lighter stick made out of bamboo or rattan, or a heavy stick made out of hickory or another hardwood. Lighter sticks are better for building speed while a heavier stick builds more strength. If you incorporate any striking into your routines, it is generally better to use a more durable hardwood to minimize the risk of the stick breaking and causing injury. While it is beyond the scope of this manual to discuss stick training in detail, many martial arts systems include stick training. Below are some general guidelines for incorporating stick training into your combat fitness workout.

**FORM:** Form training focuses on developing coordination. Conduct movements slowly, focusing on correct form. It can be helpful to film yourself to evaluate your form.

**ENDURANCE:** You can use stick training to build endurance by conducting repeated drills at a sustainable pace without any rest. With practice, it is possible to move continuously for over an hour.

**SPEED:** To build speed, perform drills as fast as possible and time the results, working towards faster and faster times.

**INTERVALS:** You can intensify the stick training workouts by performing speed or endurance intervals with prescribed rest periods, just as you would for a running routine.

**STRIKING:** Striking a bag or rubber target (like a tire) with the stick places a greater emphasis on power, grip strength and shock absorption.

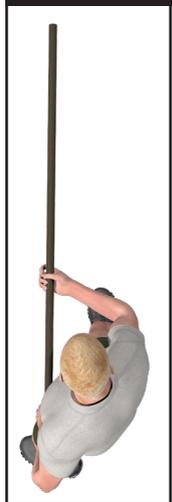
# STICK TRAINING

## Four-Direction Drill (1 of 8)

There are an unlimited number of possible stick training drills and by studying martial arts you can learn existing drills and develop your ability to design your own. Below is one example of a drill that is easy to learn and incorporates simple functional movements. You do not need to spend years studying martial arts to reap the fitness benefits of stick training. Even incorporating the single drill below into your existing fitness program could help you make significant fitness gains. The sequence below can be repeated as many times as you would like. Since each sequence ends with a 90-degree turn, conducting them one after another will lead you to conduct the pattern in a complete circle (four directions) until you are facing the same direction you started in.

**1**

**STARTING POSITION:** Begin by holding the stick close to one end, with your hands about shoulder width apart, the right hand in front of the left hand. You should hold the stick near your waist and point it where an imaginary opponent's eyes would be. Your right foot should be forward and your knees slightly bent in a comfortable, fighter's stance.

**FRONT****TOP****ANGLE**

# STICK TRAINING

## Four-Direction Drill (2 of 8)

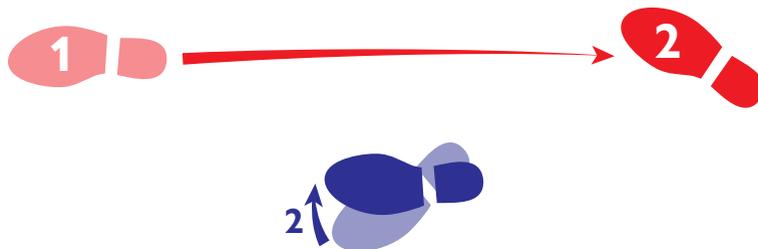
**2****JAB:** Shuffle forward slightly as you jab the stick forward in a strike to the head.**FRONT****TOP****ANGLE****FOOTWORK**

# STICK TRAINING

## Four-Direction Drill (3 of 8)

**3**

**UNDER THE ARM:** Step back with the right leg as you swing the stick over your head in a counter-clockwise motion and then strike downward and to the right at a 45-degree angle. The stick should end up under your arm with the butt of the stick braced in the armpit.

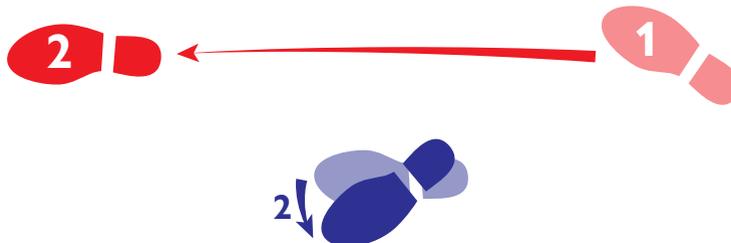
**FRONT VIEW****START****END****SIDE VIEW****START****END****FOOTWORK**

# STICK TRAINING

## Four-Direction Drill (4 of 8)

**4**

**DIAGONAL STRIKE:** Step forward with the right foot as you bring the stick back along the path it just came, swinging over the head in a clockwise motion and then striking downward and to the left at a 45-degree angle.

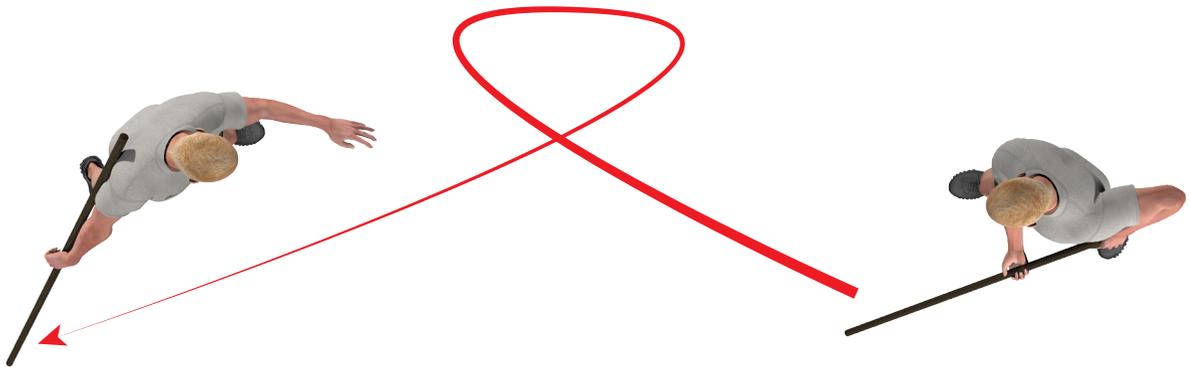
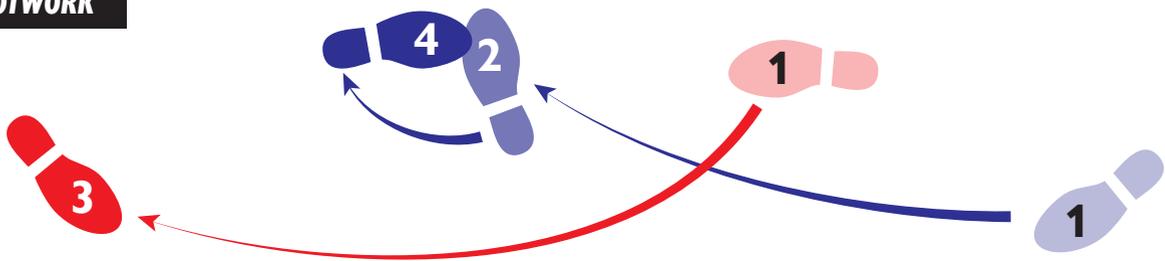
**FRONT VIEW****START****END****SIDE VIEW****START****END****FOOTWORK**

# STICK TRAINING

## Four-Direction Drill (5 of 8)

**5**

**180-DEGREE TURN AND STRIKE:** Bring the stick back along the path it just came, raising it up and to the right and swinging it over your head in a counterclockwise motion. As you do this you will step forward with the left leg while spinning 180-degrees to your right. Your right leg will swing around and step back as you strike downward and to the right with the stick at a 45-degree angle, bringing the stick under your arm.

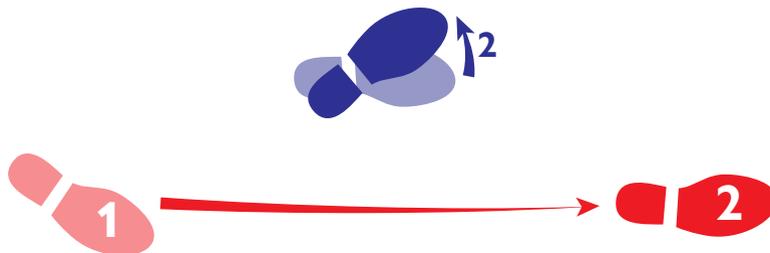
**TOP VIEW****SIDE VIEW****FOOTWORK**

# STICK TRAINING

## Four-Direction Drill (6 of 8)

**6**

**DIAGONAL STRIKE:** Step forward with the right foot as you bring the stick back along the path it just came, swinging over the head in a clockwise motion and then striking downward and to the left at a 45-degree angle.

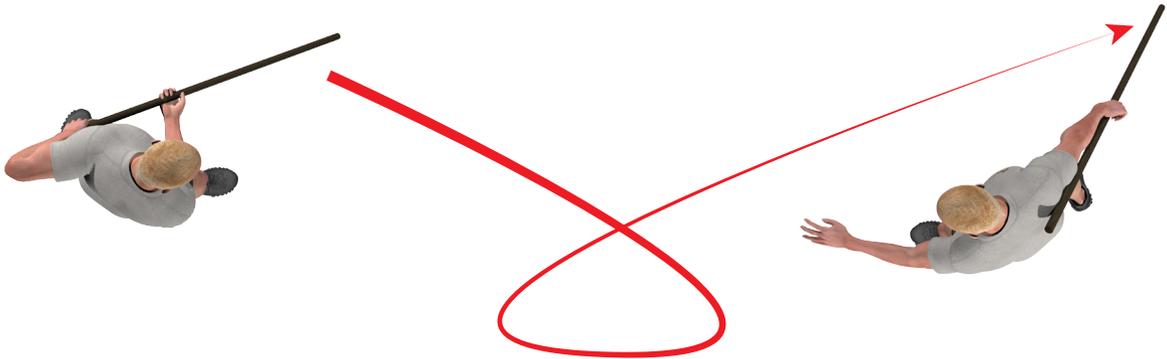
**FRONT VIEW****START****END****SIDE VIEW****START****END****FOOTWORK**

# STICK TRAINING

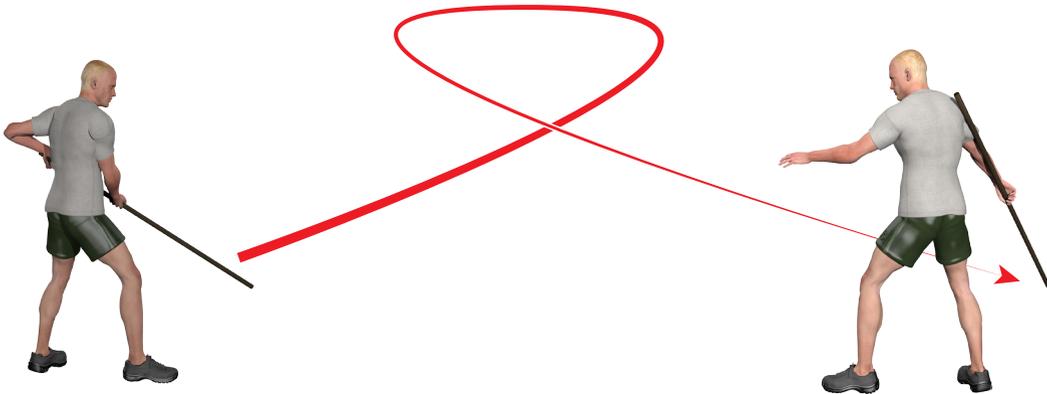
## Four-Direction Drill (7 of 8)

- 7 180-DEGREE TURN AND STRIKE:** Bring the stick back along the path it just came, raising it up and to the right and swinging it over your head in a counterclockwise motion. As you do this you will step forward with the left leg while spinning 180-degrees to your right. Your right leg will swing around and step back as you strike downward and to the right with the stick at a 45-degree angle, bringing the stick under your arm.

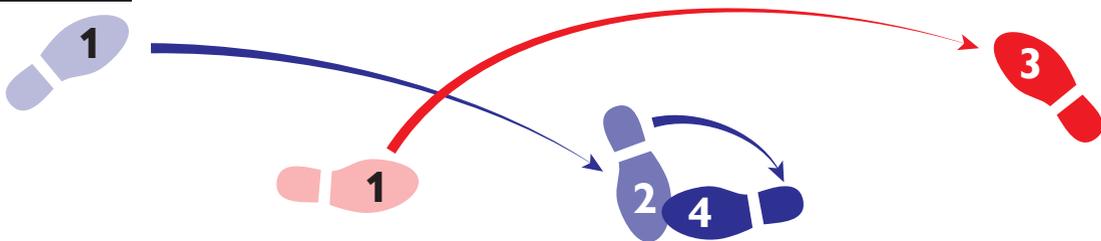
TOP VIEW



SIDE VIEW



FOOTWORK



# STICK TRAINING

## Four-Direction Drill (8 of 8)

### 8

**90-DEGREE TURN AND STRIKE:** Bring the stick back along the path it just came, swinging over the head in a clockwise motion and then striking downward and to the left at a 45-degree angle. As you do this you will perform a 90-degree turn to your left by stepping forward and to the left with the right leg and then letting the left leg step back as you strike. At this point you can repeat the full 8-step sequence as many times as you would like.

FRONT VIEW

START



END



SIDE VIEW

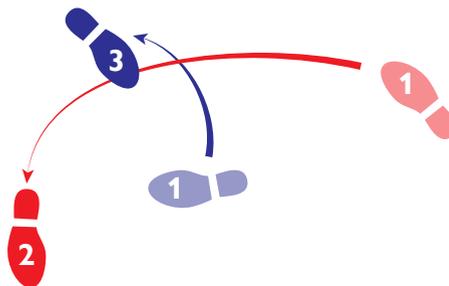
START



END



FOOTWORK

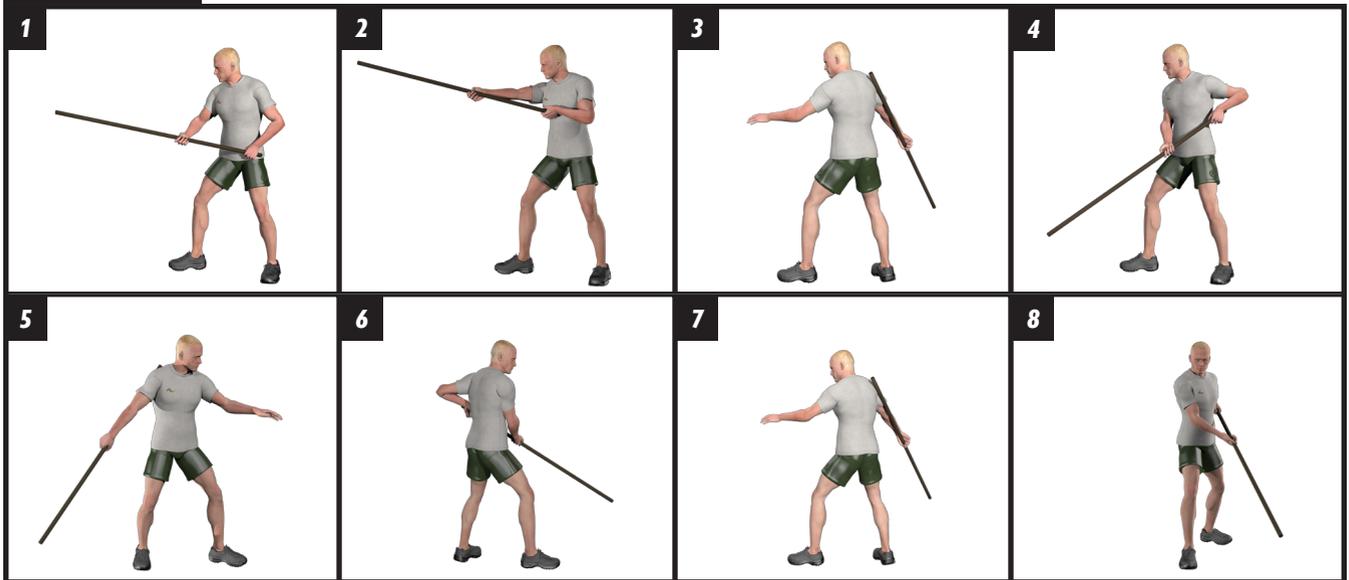


# STICK TRAINING

## Four-Direction Drill (Complete Sequence)

To further clarify the movement sequence, the diagram below shows the ending position for each of the 8 moves in sequence from the side and top. Once again, since the sequence ends with a 90-degree turn, if you repeat the full sequence four times you will rotate around in a full circle, ending the drill facing the same direction you started.

### SIDE VIEW



### TOP VIEW

