

# Recreate Historical Swordsmanship from Historical Sources

## 05 The Principles of Creating Drill Transcription

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### **Guy Windsor:**

Hello and welcome back to Recreating Historical Swordsmanship from Historical Sources. In this section, we're going to be looking at creating your cornerstone drill and this requires that we have a solid look at how drills are created, what they're for, and how to do it. The principles of creating drill that I have run my school on for the last 15 years goes something like this. Number one, put first things first and this is important because in every drill there's a certain amount of assumed knowledge. When you're creating your drills, you have to start with the assumed knowledge being zero. If your drill has an attack and a defence in it, you must make sure that the attack is taught first, possibly in a separate drill. So put first things first and make sure that the drill doesn't depend on any knowledge that the students do not yet have.

Number two, every drill should teach one thing. There is a primary purpose to every drill you create. Of course, there may be many secondary purposes and the drill can be trained to do all sorts of other things but in its essence the drill should have one primary purpose. For instance, it might represent a specific play from a specific treatise in a trainable and accessible way or it might develop the ability to deceive with feints. Those are two completely separate types of drills. Each drill should teach one thing. The classic rookie mistake when creating drills is to try and cram too much stuff in. If your drill successfully teaches one thing, it is a good drill. If it successfully teaches two things at once, it's an impossible drill. Every drill teaches one thing.

Next up, we must distinguish between breadth and depth. Breadth is here are these eight techniques or what have you and we're going to put them all into a drill so you have a zip file of these eight techniques to practice. Eight is a ridiculously large number. Normally a drill might have--if we take for example, first drill from my longsword syllabus, there's a mandritto, fendente, parry from the right, counter with a pummel strike, and the pummel strike is countered with a second pummel strike. So that's quite a lot of material and the intention behind that drill is to teach the fundamental tactical structure of the system and a few basic actions. Breadth is adding new stuff.

Depth is being able to do that stuff under pressure. For example, if we took the same first drill and we created a version of it in which we are training the attacker to pummel strike more effectively, for instance, that would be training depth. In their basic form, the drills you create will emphasize either breadth or depth. Of course, these are not mutually exclusive but you should be clear at the outset whether your drill is intended to teach a series of things to expand the student's knowledge or to teach the ability to do a particular thing better than they could do it before which is deepening their knowledge.

Lastly, we should distinguish between technical and tactical. A technical drill tells you how to do something. A tactical drill tells you when to do it and why. These are fundamentally different problems. If for example I got hit in the head because I didn't know how to parry, I'd need a tactical drill to teach me that in this circumstance the parry is the correct response. If I parried but my parry failed because it wasn't good enough then I need a technical drill to teach me how to parry better. In every drill that you create, you should distinguish between technical and tactical and in their basic form, every drill should be either a technical drill or a tactical drill. At the basic level of the syllabus, every drill is a technical drill because your students don't yet know the techniques on which the system is built.

Drills can be solo or done in pairs, sometimes in multiple opponent situations but let's leave that aside for now and just distinguish drills as being solo or in pairs. Every solo drill at this stage is a technical drill. Every pair drill can be either technical or tactical and it is important to distinguish between drills which are intended to be trained alone, drills which are intended to be trained in pairs. In general, a handling drill which makes you flip the sword around in all sorts of funny ways is a technical drill but not terribly tactical and shouldn't be done in pairs. Keep those distinctions in mind. The drills you're going to come up with will emphasize either attributes, tactics, or technique. Here's a convenient Venn diagram I've put together for you because of course at the more advanced level, drills do tend to work on more than one of these factors but basically drills work on attributes such as strength and speed and pushups for example, also sword handling is perhaps the most common example. They are not necessarily directly tied to any particular kind sword technique or anything else.

If you like, you can think of a conditioning exercise as an attribute training drill. Technical drills are the base of most martial arts systems. All of the basic set drills that you're creating, your syllabus will be fundamentally technical drills which teach technique. Tactical drills obviously work on tactics and we're going to have a look later on in this lecture about how to create a tactical drill. Where lines get blurred are with the more advanced training. For example, if your technical drill is being trained hard and fast for the purpose of developing the attribute of speed, we can call it an advanced technical drill and it'll be there in the little crossover place between and the blue circle and the yellow circle. If technical drills which are trained especially hard especially fast with especially large amounts of power tend to be called advanced tactical drills and they also obviously training attributes.

Of course, the drill in which you train tactics, technique, and attributes all at once is free play and as you would expect, anything that does more than one thing at a time tends to be not terribly efficient at doing any one of those things but in a swordfight, you do have to be able to do good tactics, good technique with speed, strength, and power so it is necessary that you have the opportunity to practice all of these things together at least at some point. Not terribly early on in your basic training I wouldn't recommend.

When you are creating a drill, you need to think to yourself where would it fit in this diagram. Is it purely a tactical drill that relies on a certain assumed technical knowledge? Is it purely an attribute

drill which requires no knowledge or sword technique? Is it a technical drill which can be done slowly and calmly and without any sense of tactics at all at least to begin with while the students are learning the basic choreography? At this stage, your drill should be solidly in the yellow circle. What we're trying to create for your cornerstone drill is a technical drill that will be trained to begin with slowly and carefully, not developing any particular attributes and while it represents a set of tactical preferences, it is not a tactical drill because it doesn't include options at this stage. I hope that's nice and clear and you should skip merrily along to the next lecture in which we're going to have a look at creating your cornerstone drill in six not so easy but fairly clear and approachable, I hope, steps. If you have any problems with these principles and you don't understand them or have difficulty with them, that is my fault, not yours so get in touch and I'll do my best to explain, elucidate, and generally help. Cheerio.

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