

Self-Defense Fighting Techniques: Kicking, Does It Work In A Real Fight Or Not?

Kicking is very effective as a fighting technique in a self-defense situation, if you know the Who, What, Where, When, Why, and How's that determines the effectiveness of kicking, or any other technique for that matter.



Being the author on several books that focus on the subject of kicking, I am often confronted by the following statement, "Kicking is ineffective at best in a real self-defense situation and is usually dangerously detrimental to the individual who attempts to use it on the street." I very rarely hear this type of statement from practicing martial artists, especially from the practitioners of karate, tae kwon do, and kickboxing. It usually comes from the "self-defense" experts and the former/current street tough guys who are now trying to teach everyone how to effectively defend themselves using everything but kicking. And you know what; for the most part they're right, but not completely.

Now that I have your attention let me explain exactly what I mean. Kicking is very effective as a fighting technique in a self-defense situation, if you know the Who, What, Where, When, Why, and How's that determines the effectiveness of kicking, or any other technique for that matter. If you don't, then kicking is about as effective in a self-defense situation as water is to a drowning man. Now let's take a look at these one at a time.

WHO is doing the kicking, and WHO are you attempting to use the kicks on?

Who is doing the kicking should be pretty obvious, that who is you. Now is the time that you need to take a really hard honest look at yourself and your present skill level at kicking. Are you technically proficient when executing your kicks? Can you execute your kicks without telegraphing the kick beforehand? Are your kicks accurate? Do you have any power in your kicks? Are you using the correct striking surface when executing your kicks? These are all questions that you need to answer honestly before even considering using your kicks effectively in a self-defense situation.

Now I know that some of you are wondering why I didn't include how high you can kick in this particular series of questions. Well don't, because kicking high is irrelevant to effective kicking in self-defense. Now I am not saying that kicking high doesn't have its uses, quite the opposite in fact. If you happen to be a gifted athlete that is capable of kicking to a high section level, then yes high section kicks can and are effective. However, for the vast majority of you, kicking at a high section level is not only ineffective, but also very foolish. Unless you are exceptionally well gifted at kicking, don't do it. And even then, only do it when your opponent is already stunned by another technique.

Who are you attempting to kick is another matter altogether. This who is your opponent. Who your opponent is today will probably not be the same one you face tomorrow. So each opponent is just as unique as each situation. Therefore, you have to have a basic understanding of the various types of opponents you may or may not be facing in order to have a basis from which to consider whether to kick, or not to kick.

Such factors include, but are not limited to; the size of your opponent, his height, mental state, his fighting experience, etc. Although the primary deciding factor whether or not to kick should be the circumstances leading up to the situation. For example; is this merely a disagreement between co-workers, an obnoxious drunk, someone breaking into your house or trying to hurt your family?

WHAT type of kicks are you attempting to use with WHAT part of your foot,

and WHAT are you attempting to kick?

What type of kick are you trying to use? Although all kicks can be effective in some situations, not all kicks are effective in all situations. For example; a roundhouse kick to the head may be effective at an already downed opponent as he tries to get back up, but totally ineffective against the 7' basketball player standing right in front of you that you just got into a confrontation with. Are you trying that jump spinning hook kick that you just learned last week, or that basic front kick that you learned all those years ago and practiced thousands upon thousands of times? Allow me to put it into perspective for you. Would you use a saw to hammer a nail into a board? How about a hammer to saw a board in two? Remember to always choose the proper tool for the proper job.

Along with selecting the proper kick, you also need to make sure you are striking with the correct striking implement each time you kick. What is more effective, striking with your toes or the ball of your foot when executing a front kick? Do you want to strike your opponent with the bottom of your foot, or the knife edge of your foot when executing a side kick? You also have to consider whether or not you are wearing shoes. For the most part, I would say that well over 95% of the time, you are going to be faced with a possible self-defense situation while wearing shoes. How does this differ from kicking with your bare feet? What type of shoes are you wearing?

What are you attempting to kick? Although applying certain kicks to certain areas of the body can be effective, not every kick applied to just anywhere on the body is going to be effective. Let's use my 7' basketball player again. What is going to be more effective, a roundhouse kick to his knee, or to his shoulder? Executing a spinning wheel kick to his head, or to his back? Having a thorough knowledge of the vital and vulnerable points on the body is absolutely essential to effectively applying kicks (or any technique for that matter) in a self-defense situation.

WHERE are you at when attempting to kick?

Where you are at has a tremendous bearing on your ability to use your kicks effectively. For example; are you in a crowded bar, on a sandy beach, an ice covered sidewalk, a grassy hill, in a gravel covered parking lot, or how about an open area free of obstructions? Each one of these places has special characteristics that need to be taken into consideration when deciding whether or not to kick. Does the crowded bar offer you a large obstacle free area in which to execute your kicks, or is it full of obstacles including bystanders, chairs, tables, stools, slippery drink spilled hardwood floors, etc. Does the sandy beach, ice covered sidewalk, or the gravel parking lot offer the stable surface area needed to balance on one leg and kick? How about the grassy hill? Are you on the top of the hill kicking down, the bottom of the hill kicking up, or the side of the hill kicking to the side? Always remember that the environment that you are kicking in has a deciding factor on the effectiveness of your kicks.

WHEN are you attempting to use your kicks?

Are you using your kicks as an initial attack, or are you using them after you have already set-up and/or staggered your opponent with another technique or techniques? For the most part, I am a firm believer in setting up your kicks by utilizing hand techniques and/or stand-up grappling skills first, in order to keep your opponent off balance in order to increase the chances of landing an effective kick. Although there have been occasions where I have personally initiated a successful attack by using one of my kicks first, I would still prefer to utilize another technique or techniques prior to executing a kick.

A jab is generally considered the easiest and fastest punch in boxing. Why? Well, simply put the jab is closest to the opponent and is thrown with more speed than force behind it. This makes the jab a very effective punch for the purpose that it was intended. That is to keep the opponent at a distance, confuse him, and to set-up the more powerful right cross and the left hook that are sure to follow.

The same exact thing works with your kicks. Utilize the hands, which are generally faster and easier to use than the legs, to keep your opponent at a distance, confuse him, and to set-up the more powerful kicks. Just like in boxing.

WHY are you in a situation where you may have to kick, and WHY are you attempting to use your kicks?

Why are you in a situation where you have to consider defending yourself? Are you there because of no other option, or did you allow yourself to be put in this situation? It has been my experience that over 90% of all physical

confrontations could be avoided if the individual first knew how to avoid them, and secondly, if the individual tried to avoid them. Depending on the circumstances, you should always try to avoid a confrontational situation if at all possible. However, there are times when it is either unavoidable, or a situation where you cannot avoid it. Remember the famous line from Bruce Lee's movie Enter the Dragon, "My style is the art of fighting without fighting." Are these words to live by? You decide.

Why are you attempting to kick? Is there an opening that you can exploit, or are you trying to show off and impress somebody? Here is a saying that my father told me when I was younger, and I am sure a lot of fathers told their sons throughout the years. It goes something like this, "Never carry a gun unless you intend to use it. Never pull that gun unless you intend to shoot it. Never point a gun at a man unless you intend to shoot him. And never, shoot a man unless you intend to kill him." The same can be said for you kicks!

And finally and perhaps most importantly, do you know:

HOW to correctly execute your kicks, and do you know HOW to correctly apply them?

These are perhaps the two most important factors that you need to consider when deciding whether or not to execute a kick in a self-defense situation. Do you truly know how to execute your kicks in order to make them the most efficient and effective kicks that you can? Do you know your kicks inside and out, forward and backward, upside down and right side up? Have you practiced those kicks thousands upon thousands of times correctly, under the watchful eye of a qualified and competent instructor? For the sake of argument let's say that you have. Now here is the rest of the how.

Do you know how to correctly apply them in a self-defense situation? The how encompasses all of the above mentioned items put together into one package. Along with the knowledge of what circumstances will best suit the use of your kicks. Would you try to kick my 7' basketball player in the head while he is standing in front of you? How about kicking the guy coming at you with a knife while you are standing on an icy sidewalk? How about you obnoxious brother-in-law at the family reunion? Remember, there is a time and place for everything, and that includes kicking.

So are the "self-defense" experts and others like them right? Well, the answer is yes, if you don't know what you are doing, and no, if you do know what you are doing. Can you achieve this ability overnight, of course not. Can you achieve this ability over a period of time, definitely! With time, patience, and proper practice, you can learn how to effectively utilize your kicking skills in a real life self-defense situation.

Short note about the author

Shawn Kovacich has been practicing the martial arts for over 25 years and currently holds the rank of 4th degree (Yodan) black belt in both Karate and Tae Kwon Do. Shawn is the author of the highly acclaimed Achieving Kicking Excellence? series and can be reached via his web site at: <http://www.kickingbooks.com>.

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