

## On Choosing a Self-Defense Instructor – © CRGI and Rory Miller

Best I can do is give some general advice. This is generic and you can get it from most qualified and knowledgeable instructors.

1) Decide why you want to train and how much you want to invest in time, money and effort. SD is a goal that involves trade-offs. You approach it differently if you want to have a security heavy lifestyle versus making big gains in a short time. Lifestyle means that things like fun and fitness are also important. As well as whether you want to continually learn more or get to a certain level and level off. There is no training that can make you safe. 'Safe' doesn't exist. It can just give you an edge and no matter how big of an edge there is a point at which it will fail.

2) What is your victim (threat? target?) profile? Are you actually at risk and if so for what? Related but different question, is there something you fear? Fears are not usually well correlated with actual risks, but if (deep down) you are training for confidence it is about Fear Management. Danger Management on the other hand is about training for competence. Once you've identified your threat profile, you can narrow down instructors.

3) Pick up a copy of "Facing Violence" and go through the table of contents. If you are interested in SD make sure that any instructor you consider covers all seven aspects of violence in the book. They are:

1. Legal and ethical issues.
2. The dynamics of real violence.
3. Avoidance and de-escalation of violence.
4. Automatic responses to an ambush.
5. Dealing with "The Freeze".
6. The fight itself.
7. Medical, legal, and psychological aftermath.

4) If this will be a life style thing, plan your "career." My suggestion is continuous study of psychology (just keep reading books and learning). There's a start of a reading list on my website.

Regarding physical training, I usually suggest working from close range to long range (start with a throwing/grappling, like judo, then move to striking, then hand weapons, then firearms, then small unit tactics if applicable) then finding an instructor who can integrate the ranges, ideally with the psychology of bad guys. Primary reason is that close range skills aren't bad habits at long range, but long range skills are often bad habits at close range.

5) It is more important for your instructor be good at what he does and for the classes to be fun, than for you find someone who has exactly what you want. You are a unique individual and no instructor or program will ever precisely match your needs. Further, you are an adult and turning yourself into the person you wish to become is entirely your responsibility. You can't shirk it. You need to take charge of your own development. I've studied with grapplers that had absolutely no understanding of what I needed, my environment or the job description, but they improved my body mechanics vastly.

6) Beware the One-Stop-Shopping attitude.

Self-defense is a minute aspect of personal safety. Assigning a hypothetical to it, for civilians physical self-defense is 5% to other 95%. For professionals, 'use of force' can be about upwards to 20% of the job. Recognize that physical training is focusing on a particular aspect, not the whole picture. This attitude encourages you to seek training and understanding in the non-physical aspects (especially from other fields) and puts physical training into perspective -- that of a specialized aspect or skill.

7) Once you've made a plan, get started. Remember, your plan and training will change as you develop. Learning self-defense will increase your problem solving ability and understanding of how the world works. As your experience increases, your training should grow and evolve too.