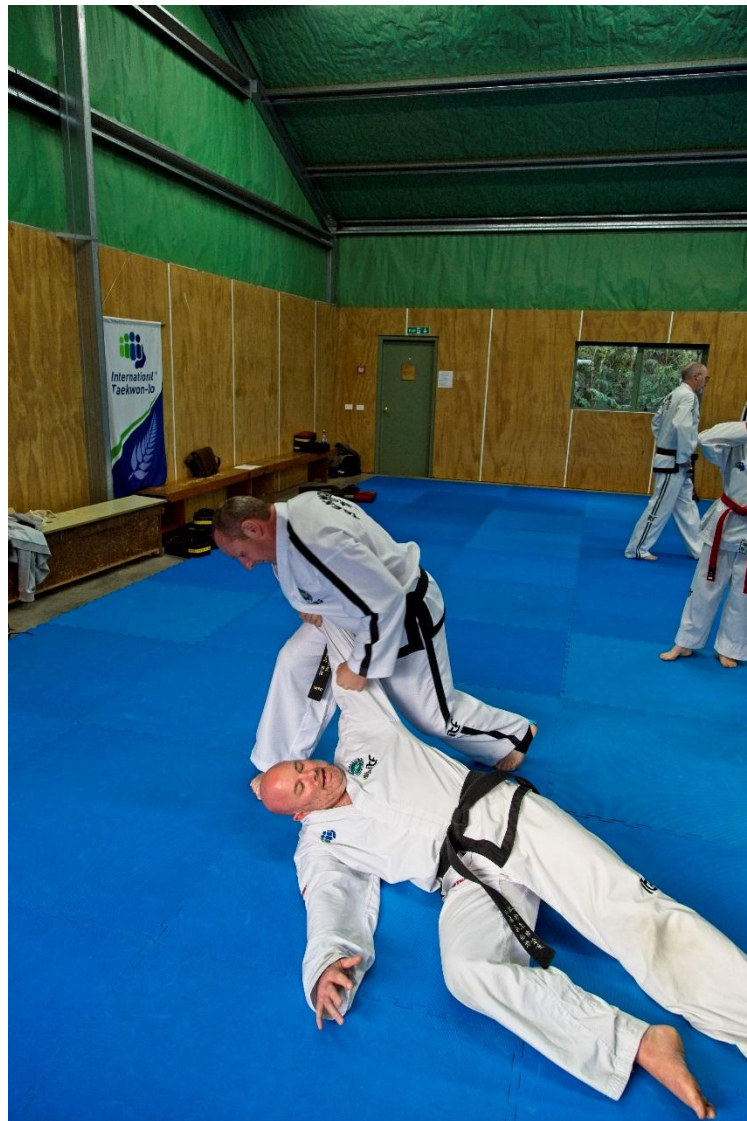


**Is my training effective in a real self-defence situation?**

**Ian Campbell, 6<sup>th</sup> Dan**



## **INTRODUCTION**

The rationale and techniques will be illustrated in a two-day course, the development of which is included in this essay. My intention is to briefly outline how and why I focus on protectiveness and delivery of application in Taekwon-Do.

Taekwon-Do is an effective, practical martial art, practiced by millions of people. The original art, developed by General Choi Hong Hi, has evolved with several different interpretations and organisations. My curiosity is not a competitive one nor is it pitched to validate any particular form. This is a dialog about how I have come to train with the International Taekwon-Do Federation, and how I now use and develop Taekwon-Do to reflect my interpretation of basic training methods, philosophy and technical application.

My focus is on the arsenal of defence and attack techniques that deliver everything promised in terms of self-defence. The potency of accurate technique is an outcome of regular training and understanding on how to reach individual potential, physically and mentally. My discussion will hopefully awaken and involve the curiosity amongst other learners. I am humbled by the opportunity to present my simple approach to training. I realise my knowledge is limited and will be challenged. It is the discussion I enjoy and the global connection that has opened my inquisitiveness and exploration.

My story and philosophy towards training has matured that began in the late 1970s. I was inspired by martial art movies and the hype where everyone wanted to be a great fighter (or so it seemed). I wanted to earn the respect of my peers in what was a competitive environment. I summoned the courage to visit a class in a town called Te Awamutu. My first class in Taekwon-Do was daunting, but on reflection a life changing decision (one of my best). I have become a lifelong learner continually trying to perfect each and every aspect of Taekwon-Do; this is my quest.

## **MY APPROACH**

The art of Taekwon-Do has not stagnated. I have experienced many developments, ideas and perceptions that continue to shape Taekwon-Do. My Taekwon-Do training has proved its worth in all my experiences with real physical encounters. These encounters have taught me to search further in the knowing how effective Taekwon-Do is. This depth of knowledge continues to develop but always in the spirit of how Taekwon-Do first came to be. Our conversations will lead to further pioneering moments if we extend our thinking beyond standard, everyday training.

It is adaptive learning that creates our willingness to be collaborative enquirers, anticipating learning from others. I am particularly interested in discovering the origins and similarities of the martial arts and their links to Taekwon-Do. This is my approach and benefits my training for protection while maintaining our traditional art.

The popularity of competitive Taekwon-Do is evidenced by the large numbers of students who are involved in tournaments. This arena benefits the accuracy, timing, reflexes, angles and distances, and balance for techniques, whether they are used in patterns or free sparring. However, in contrast to self-defence, competitive sparring is very rules-based explicitly to avoid violent action and injury. It is the case then, that sparring does not permit many of the close-quarters techniques contained in all our patterns, and yet it is these techniques that are key to successful self-defence. This begs the question – “would competitive style sparring be useful on the street in a real self-defence situation?”. The answer to this is probably “no”.

There is no doubt that competitive Taekwon-Do is an essential part of the modern martial art; it may even be necessary for its survival, in terms of student numbers and popularity. But we should not lose sight of the fact that the techniques and rules applied to competition are not conducive to developing a practical model of self-defence. To develop this model, we need to extend our thinking beyond the normal rules, think outside the square, extending our basic techniques beyond the obvious.

For example, the focus on long range tactics suits the tournament arena – in particular, this involves long ranging kick and punching within the confines of the sparring ring. However, unplanned events where there may be no rules or assistance require a person to respond with the urgency to survive, relying on reactive flinch responses. Part of the problem here is that these responses are not always part of regular training.

There is far more to be revealed in terms of our art and so my curious-learner approach focuses on close range or close quarter contact and the willingness to discover the obscure applications that perhaps purposefully have not been generally taught this way; techniques such as throws, locks chokes and takedowns.

For me, the best way to think about self-defence is through the **Composition of Taekwon-Do**. General Choi Hong Hi developed the concept to emphasise that all components of the art are interdependent and interrelated. For example, the practising of the Tul is not a separate exercise to the practice of step sparring or fundamental movements. The key to Composition is that everything we do in Taekwon-Do is intertwined, in mind, body and spirit. This, for me, is the essence of self-defence.



*Diagram from the Condensed encyclopaedia 1995 Page725*

The Composition refers to the cycle of Taekwon-Do (Soonhwan do). Grand Master General Choi illustrates the composition in a clever way using a die (as in cast and die) in the middle of the diagram. The die contains the words “ Taekwon-Do - the art of self-defence ”. The Composition is always in play with everything we do and the key for connecting our purpose of application. Mindful use of the composition is important; we should always consider the whole cycle with everything Taekwon-Do.

## THE TWO-DAY COURSE

I have developed a two-day course focusing on elements of Taekwon-Do that allows the student to develop connections with their daily practical training in the dojang. It is a collaborative course that builds resilience and confidence towards self-defence whilst connecting our fundamental techniques and mindfulness of the composition of Taekwon-Do. The following notes reference my course dialog, thoughts and application throughout the course



### **“Breadth, No Matter How Wide, Means Little Without Depth”**

No matter how many “Tul” or patterns you know,  
they will be useless to you, if you don't  
practice them enough.

“If practiced properly, two or three patterns  
will suffice as your defence. All others can be  
studied as sources of additional knowledge”.

(Kenwa Mabuni).



### ***Safe Practice***

From the outset we should be mindful of the mental and technical abilities of our students (importantly our younger students minds can be heavily influenced), likewise the physical capabilities of older students can unintentionally be pushed too far. Taekwon-Do is an impact martial art and concentrates on contact from strikes, punches, thrusts, blocks and various kicks. These techniques all focus on vital spots and point of contact, and are developed in our patterns, fundamental movements ,prearranged sparring and step sparring.

A seasoned martial artist will understand our techniques and applications and how they vary in purpose. If we were to teach without responsibility, there would be many injuries. General Choi's genius foresaw this aspect and designed a system that pays attention to the grading system that details and allows students to progress at their own pace and with confidence. Teach the right application at the right time to the correct audience.

There is evidence in some martial arts, such as Karate, that original techniques were varied so that the real purpose would not be realised by younger students and cause injuries during training. As an example of safe practice, here is an excerpt from *Bunkai-Jutsu: The Practical Application of Karate Kata* by Iain Abernethy

*“In 1901, the great ‘Anko’ Yasutsune Itsou (1830–1915) campaigned successfully to get karate added to the physical education program of the Shuri Jinjo Elementary School. As it stood, Itsou believed karate to be too dangerous to be taught to children and set about disguising the more dangerous techniques. As a result of these modifications, the children were taught mostly blocking and punching. Itsou also changed many of the more dangerous strikes into punches with the clenched fist. This enabled the children to gain such benefits as improved health and discipline from their karate practice without giving them knowledge of the highly effective and dangerous fighting techniques.”*

## **TRAINING DELIVERY FOR THE TWO-DAY COURSE**

### ***Communication***

Communication plays a role with how we protect ourselves, but does it sit in the composition of Taekwon-Do?

Any self-defence that uses force maybe questioned under the law in terms of “reasonable action”. What you do in defence of yourself or in the defence of another can be scrutinised and is accountable. Would your actions stack up to be reasonable, rational and proportionate to the circumstances?

When facilitating self-defence training sessions, particularly with younger students, we should emphasise communication before getting into the more physical aspects, because their technical abilities are not fully realised during the early years of training. Students who do not fully understand the capacity and forcefulness of fundamental techniques could easily use excessive force in circumstances that do not warrant it. So, control and understanding of behaviour and situational awareness is imperative.

ITFNZ has developed a very responsive and practical approach to self-defence syllabus learning applications. The ITFNZ handbook provides examples of situational awareness, communication strategies and spontaneous options for practice. I will reference examples from the handbook and thread them into the composition of Taekwon-Do that features of my discussion of communication.

*Reference: Self-defence handbook. Master McPhail and Mr Mark Banicevich first addition 2014.*

In most situations, communication is the key in the first instant. Tactfully managing and escaping situations which require little or no physical interface is self-defence, It is the most successful approach that I have experienced professionally during confrontation. With a practiced formal approach to de-escalation we can consciously facilitate successful outcomes from aggressive and angry people.

General Choi designed the composition diagram with no beginning and no end; all components are seamlessly connected, no additional element required. Mindfulness is a thread throughout the composition even though it is not shown explicitly. It is an element that inherently influences how we develop concepts and application towards real life self-defence. Tactical communication with hostile (angry) individuals is a skill that can be practiced. This is as much a part of **Dallyon** as it is to condition the body. Building your **mental arsenal** towards self-defence is a part of Dallyon.

Understanding body language and formally practicing processes that de-escalate aggressive situations will lessen the need to engage with physical intervention. My real-life experiences provide ample evidence that backs up the idea of tactical Communication. Situations that result in altercation nearly always event begin with recognisable behaviours. Knowing the signs or “situational awareness” is important to preventing escalation.

Body language conveys more than words in a de-escalation situation. About 50-60% of the meaning we take from emotive situations is derived from body signals (about another 30% is tone and only 10% is content or actual word meaning). Communication must be practiced as part of your development. Understanding situational awareness and perceived cumulative assessment (PCA). can formally increase your ability to deploy de-escalation techniques or if required escalate your own actions that are proportionate to the situation. If you train your thoughts actions and reactions by including tactful communications to your rapporteur, your confidence with self-defence will increase. This will help you build your personal arsenal. It is important to learn about your own strengths and weaknesses through self-awareness

Practicing **role plays** is a way we can improve and prepare ourselves, in much the same way as we develop with step sparring and so on. It is important to set rules of engagement beforehand to ensure we are training in a safe environment.



## PRACTICE

- 1) Apply techniques with care and purpose.
- 2) Ensure your training partner understands what you are going to do.
- 3) Be a compliant opponent, do not resist applications this is a development phase.
- 4) Respect each other and level of ability.

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Learning should be fun so, have fun and enjoy all things Taekwon-Do



### *Fundamental Movements*

The Composition of Taekwon-Do is always my first point of reference when analysing any thought or technical application. Fundamental movements help to transform a student's physical understanding of application. incrementally building the complex nature of movement as part of their development. Being mindful as to what application (technique) is being practiced and how we think about what development requirements are to be employed to complete a specific move or technique will lead to desired outcomes. There is no application (of a technique) that will not include each element of the composition. It is the starting point in terms of reaching the best outcome in a physical altercation. Inextricably linked to the Composition is **The Theory of Power** that should be applied to all instances of any movement. For the purposes of self-defence, the full use of our body in an instant or at a flinch is important for effectiveness.



## **Practical Application Emerges From Fundamental Movements**

- 1) How do I develop my understanding surrounding fundamental movements?
- 2) What do I physically do to develop my capability?
- 3) Why is it important to concentrate on the Composition of Taekwon-Do?



General Choi studied and incorporated the science behind our body kinetics with respect to the fundamental movements in Taekwon-Do. The theory provides a rational approach so that humans can reach their full potential. Developing fundamental movements is the key to all techniques and begins with the Theory of power: Reaction Force, Concentration, Equilibrium, Speed, Breath Control, Mass.

*Reference Page 48-63 condensed encyclopaedia fourth edition by General Choi Hong Hi.*

When the theory of power is applied along with repetitive practice, each technique will eventually develop body reflex and instantaneous (flinch) reaction. This is when adaptation and variation improve the dynamics of real-life self-defence.





## **Training Concepts And Theories For Developing Self Defence Applications**

- 1) Always relate back to fundamental movements
- 2) Practice in a way that develops correct angle and distances
- 3) Developing capability is incremental and should relate directly to students level of ability
- 4) Become confident with what works for you

**"Practice makes progress and from this understanding emerges"**

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### ***Patterns "Tul"***

**Tul is not a mock fight! It is like a text-book to the student.**



A beginning practitioner learns to work incrementally through gradings, progressing to higher skill levels; attention to detail is most important. Correct movement, posture, application angle

and distance are essential and always considered part of a student's proficiency. Conditioning mind and body through practice of patterns increases the application for self-defence. This is discovered through practicing fundamental movements and patterns.

General Choi Hong Hi explains. "Patterns are various fundamental movements most of which represent either attack or defence techniques set to a logical sequence. Improves flexibility of movements. Master body shifting builds muscles and breath control, develops fluid and smooth motions and gains rhythmical movements. In short, a pattern can be compared with a unit tactic or a word, if fundamental movement is an individual soldier's training alphabet.

*Reference Page 524 condensed encyclopaedia fourth edition by General Choi Hong Hi.*



**"Patterns Are Various Fundamental Movements,  
Most Of Represent Either Attack Or Defense  
Techniques Set To Fixed Logical Sequence"**

Taekwon Do Condensed encyclopaedia pg.524

- 1) Break down pattern movements (Tul) pay attention to connecting, continuous motion and shift movements to discover self-defence.
- 2) Practice your discoveries with a training partner.
- 3) Develop your sequence in slow motion (it is important to deliver your technique correctly see/feel application fits purpose).
- 4) Developing techniques by delivering repeatedly in slow motion, this will instinctively transfer to normal speed when urgency is required. A flinch reaction will occur.
- 5) Humans function well in rota systems. Practicing repetitive routines will result in discovering what works for you.



Patterns are the template for developing self-defence. General Choi Hong Hi provided many tactical offence and defence techniques in a pattern sequence, so that once perfected one could interoperate and develop a responsive, intuitive, practical arsenal outside the framework of the prescribed tul.

Learning, training and refining a Tul is an individual way to form an understanding. However, performing a pattern over and over and developing a sequence of movements, for example performing a rising block or a knife hand guarding block, and not knowing the rationale, will encapsulate information but not learning. So, if you continue to complete a pattern without purpose you will only learn an individual form, like having a manual and never reading it. This kind of learning may never serve a practical purpose. We need to look at the principals of movement i.e. body shifting, sliding and most importantly, stances - how, when and why we move, stamp, lengthen or shorten stances. General Choi has this to say about stances:

*“The forceful and finer techniques of attack and defence are largely dependent on a correct stance since the stance is the starting point of every Taekwon-Do movement. Stability, agility, balance and flexibility are the controlling factors.”*

*Reference Page (65) condensed encyclopaedia fourth edition by General Choi Hong Hi.*

### ***Step Sparring/Sparring***

Step sparring provides a gradual approach for a student to develop accuracy and practical approaches towards an actual encounter. It is a prescribed part of the ITF Taekwon-Do syllabus;

‘Sparring is a physical application of attack and defence techniques gained from fundamental movements and patterns exercise against actual moving opponent or opponents under various situations. It is therefore not only indispensable to promote fighting spirit and courage to train the eyes, to read the opponents tactic as well as manoeuvres , to forge, toughen or develop the attacking tools , to test their own skills, and ability to learn other movement is hardly to be gained from patterns or fundamental exercise.’

Furthermore; ‘Instructors should encourage the beginner to learn the necessary patterns and fundamental movements before participating in class sparring especially tournament.’

*Reference Page 598 condensed encyclopaedia fourth edition by General Choi Hong Hi).*

General Choi Hong Hi’s system of sparring is described in over eighty pages of explanations and diagrams in the condensed encyclopaedia, emphasising the importance of regular inclusion in training.

Step sparring is that part of Taekwon-Do composition which provides the rationale and utility of a technique at close, middle, long range. Step sparring provides a dynamic and/or static context to self-defence.

In my role as an Instructor it can be difficult to develop in students a culture that emphasises the importance of the different forms of step sparring. At the beginning student level, the complexity of step sparring appears difficult to grasp in the time spaces that loom towards the next grading. The importance of learning the effectiveness and purpose of step sparring - angles, distances attacking tools and vital spots tends to be slow, which means lessons may not be so engaging. Therefore, I rationalise that, in the early stages of student learning, practicing is enough - knowledge will come later to the dedicated student. General Choi provided the templates for this approach.

## ***Dallyon***

Dallyon is conditioning (maintenance) of the body, but also includes mind, body, self-awareness, and soul. Dallyon overarches everything we do,” and closely links all aspects of Taekwon-Do. For me, dallyon has a powerful influence on the outcomes of self-defence. On page 15 of the Taekwon-Do encyclopaedia (fourth edition) General Choi Hong Hi explains the Definition of Taekwon-Do.

***“It is the scientific use of the body in the method of “self-defence” a body that has gained the ultimate use of its facilities through intensive physical and mental training”.***

From the perspective of physical application in realistic situations, the General’s definition of Taekwon-Do is key to understanding a pathway to better self-defence outcome. However, we can also interpret some of the deeper, underlying meanings embedded in the definition. I liken a lack of attention to Dallyon to that of a car that is not kept in good repair, becomes mechanically sound, and at some point will not perform as expected.

## ***Dallyon and Taekwon-Do practice***

*“Incessant training is essential to keep oneself in top form and physical condition. In training, all the muscles of the human body will be used”.*

Here, “incessant” means conditioning or training that is “fit for purpose”. Repetitive exercises to gain the application for self-defence is further developed in the encyclopaedia with the use of Training Aids (page 376-408 condensed encyclopaedia Training aids). Forging posts, straw pads will focus the attacking tools and improve angle, trajectory and distance for technique delivery. This kind of dallyon can be gradually introduced in the earlier training sessions with a focus on the attacking tools, including aerobic and anaerobic conditioning.

## ***Dallyon and The Theory of Power***

The Taekwon-Do theory of power, as explained in depth in the encyclopaedia, is the perfect “how”, and leads towards instinctive training (*Page 48-63 Taekwon-Do encyclopaedia (fourth edition) General Choi Hong Hi*).

The theory of power provides the scientific building blocks for the best delivery of Taekwon-Do physical applications. The theory of power is in all our training sessions at the dojang, even though it may not be specifically mentioned. However, this is not always emphasized during specific self-defence sessions. From my prospective, it is so important that all elements of the Theory must be employed, no matter the circumstances. When developing repetitive movements for the purpose of close quarter self-defence, it takes a methodical approach armed with factual interpretations to uncover an individual’s favoured starting point. The starting point or **flinch aspect** of any practice is when the student will develop the **most important reflex**.



Practiced correctly, it will alter a student's perspective on their personal capability in terms of close quarter unarmed combat. If dallyon is ignored, then there is a greater risk that close quarter combat outcomes will never develop to full potential . All the conditioning provided by dallyon, physical and mental, is essential for complete training outcomes.

The Training secrets of Taekwon-Do are incredibly important in terms of Dallyon. Learning physical correctness in the way we apply techniques is the way to understand the complexity of Taekwon-Do movement. If practiced correctly, this will open the mind to the many ways for defence and attack and traditional close quarter applications will come alive. When a student is mindful to employ the nine elements (secrets) as explained by General Choi Hong Hi, they will begin to uncover a and simplify their method and quickly develop their personal repertoire of purposeful and enjoyable ways of learning close quarter unarmed combat. This must include repetitive, controlled drills so that an instinctive physical reaction becomes embedded.

### ***Training secrets summary***

- Study the theory of power thoroughly.
- Understand the purpose and method of each movement.
- Bring the movement of eyes, hands, feet and breath into a single coordinated action.
- Choose the appropriate attacking tool for each vital spot
- Become familiar with correct angle and distance for attack and defence.
- Keep both the arms and legs bent slightly while the movement is in motion.
- All movements must with backward motion with very few exceptions once the movement is in motion it should not be stopped before reaching the target.
- Create sine wave during the movement by utilising knee spring
- Exhale briefly at the moment of each blow except a connecting motion

# “Taekwon-Do - a way of life”

## The flinch sequence



1 Flinch



2 Preparation



3 Response

## REVIEW OF THE TEO-DAY COURSE

Throughout the two-day course the following points are introduced

### *Range of Movement*

In the context of self-defence, each movement in a tul has a primary purpose (as set out by General Choi), but can transition to a different outcome. For example, a middle outward block with the inner forearm can transition to a release or a strike. Shifting, slipping and dodging will assist with the effectiveness of an application. By bringing this aspect to the fore during step sparring we can emphasise its importance for the adaptability of close-range strikes, thrusts and punches.

Most patterns are asymmetric sequences; training focused on close quarter combat should be performed in the same manner.” Being mindful not to creep away from what we know particularly the combinations of connecting shifting and slipping including thoughts around body facing and angles.

In the same way we apply our patterns, so we can apply single techniques and movements. So often students will adapt in way that does not replicate the preciseness of techniques delivered in a pattern and this confuses the mind and physical outcome, Step sparring is a time when we can reconfigure and discover the authentic and original applications of techniques.

It is also wise to remember that more is less, where counter applications can also be practiced in a single movement. So, whilst it’s important to develop combinations to access vital spots, remember that simple tactics deployed accurate and swiftly will most likely bring a higher possibility of success against an attacker.

So, what possible lessons can we extract from General Choi Hong Hi’s example of the composition of Taekwon-Do? And how do we further develop and acquire physical close quarter effective outcomes?

The composition specifically talks about “sparring technique”, so at the forefront is developing one’s self against a formidable and equal opponent’s mostly through tournament governed rules. But consider Sparring technique through a different lens, outside the confines of tournament sparring, although still controlled and safe.

Pre-arranged sparring, sometimes referred to as flow drills, is also a development path within the composition. The value of pre-arranged sparring for coloured belts is to perfect techniques in an uncomplicated way. However, for more advanced students the fundamental techniques used in pre-arranged can be used to develop a whole different set of outcomes. For example, a forearm rising block for a coloured belt defends against a downward strike; but for a different outcome the rising forearm can disable the on-coming downward strike (and if close enough even dislocate the opponent’s shoulder) followed by an open-handed grab of the opponent’s arm



followed by a take-down. The important steps here are movement into stances and changing angles relative to the opponent. The initial flinch reaction (e.g. from full facing to half facing) is also the key to successful self-defence.

The follow bullet points are parking spots developed for the course:

### *You can't counter what you don't know*



### **“You Can’t Counter What You Don’t Know”**

- Practice multiple attacks, punches left and right, grabs.
- Two hands together often have a grappling element.
- Blocks can instantly change into an effective strike.





## “Movements Done Close”

- Your elbow should be able to touch your opponent.
- You can hit any part of the body; apply joint techniques, stomp, trip or throw.
- If you are outside this range perhaps consider escaping.



## “Range Of Movements”

- Each movement in a pattern (Tul) can represent a potential range of movements.
- Symmetric: Most patterns (Tul) are asymmetric sequences, training should be performed in the same manner.
- Application can be practiced in a single movement. Combinations can become to lengthy.



## CONCLUSION

My thesis concentrates on a simplistic approach for unravelling training approaches and training delivery for self-defence the transition from Dojang training to real life situations. I have attempted to focus my thoughts and physical approach by developing a two-day training course to share my approach with other practitioners, designed to develop and expand self –defence situations and events.

I acknowledge my discussion points are subjective and open to interpretation. There is an endless of approaches for practicing martial arts. My discussion is focussed on a contribution to a wider audience and to be used as a reference.

My research has used the convenience of modern learning tools. Technology is revolutionary in terms of speedy research and a great way to learn. However, it pays to be cautious and I always looked towards my Taekwon-Do for authentication. I encourage the curious learner in all serious martial artists to learn more. Equally, my discussion is about ensuring the Taekwon do practitioner is reminded of the traditional training approaches.

My intention here is to communicate and connect authentic technique and applications of the Art of Taekwon-Do. A student should always pay extra attention to the Encyclopaedias written by General Choi Hong Hi, and to the knowledge of senior practitioners. This approach has heavily influenced my approach to self-defence.

My holistic view to all things Taekwon-Do is threaded throughout the discussion, specifically to the way I approach dallyon, such that there is no separation with the physicality and mental application for each element of self-defence. Practicing the “DO” is arguably the most important element when authentic martial artists emerge.

I have discussed a very narrow aspect of the art of Taekwon-Do and it is important I convey to the reader that Taekwon-Do is much more to me than self-defence. Practicing the “Do” is the highest priority; it is everything. It centres my approach to life by bringing diversity and inclusiveness in a real sense of creating wellness and wellbeing. The connectivity between the physical training, mental training and wellness, combined with social interaction with likeminded people is healthy and the magnet that draws me to my Taekwon-Do life. I honestly leave Taekwon-Do training sessions feeling great and planning for the next one. I believe this is the way we can collectively build a more peaceful world.

Finally, it is a privilege to be in a space with an opportunity to share ideas and training methods with all other Taekwon-Do practitioners. I would like to pay special acknowledgement to Master McPhail for his undoubted loyalty to Taekwon do. His professional ability to provide informed instruction, advice, and structure has enabled many like me, a journeyman, to realise our own potential. Likewise, my Instructor Master Evan Davidson for his steady influence in

Taekwon-Do, particularly the “Do”. Master Davidson has been the most influential Instructor in terms of the “way” to remain a traditionalist . Master Willy Lim my first Instructor. Master Lim provided the early lessons of Taekwon-Do. His sessions are still imprinted in my memory; they provide the resilience to continue onward.