

Ma-ai : The Combative Distance

This is an important concept – the distance between you and the opponent at which you attack or defend. It is sometimes said that he who controls this range, controls the confrontation. There is much truth in this.

Ma-ai is in fact a double distance.

- It is the distance between you and him
Whereby you can optimally attack him
- But it is also the distance between him and you
Whereby he can optimally attack you!

There are two other important components.

- Timing of your attack
- Speed of movement

So the distance interval at which you choose to face your attacker depends on multiple factors, including height, arm and leg length, ability to spring quickly into action that ties in with overall attained level of skill, moral determination and intent to survive.

It is considered that training with various lengths of weapons improves one's awareness of ma-ai.

Certainly footwork plays an important part in the total approach of getting to where you need to be for correct ma-ai. But real automatic footwork skill only develops after years of training. Perhaps at 2nd Dan Black Belt level. So immediately we have a problem!

But at your level, it is not a problem:

- **Confront him at what feels a comfortable distance**
- **Warn him not to come closer**
- **If he advances – defend yourself maximally**