

**Mastering
Eskrima
Disarms**



TESTIMONIALS

“Martial arts grandmaster, doctor of Oriental medicine, author and publisher, Mark Wiley is in a class of his own.”

— Jose M. Fraguas
Publisher, *Masters Magazine*

“Being an avid practitioner and senior instructor of the Filipino martial arts I, have as you would expect, tried to get access to as much historical and reference material as possible on the subject. Mark Wiley has over the years been one of my staple references with numerous publications. I have found his works to be insightful, educational and an invaluable source of accurate information. Mark Wiley is the best writer of our time on the Filipino martial arts and I highly recommend that anyone who is serious about FMA read his works and keep them on hand as valuable reference points. I am sure this latest work by Master Wiley will be as invaluable as his previous works for the serious practitioners and historians alike.”

— Tuhon Pat O’Malley
Spokesperson, *British Council of Kali Eskrima Arnis Instructor*

“An ancient art that is surviving in modern times is shown new light by Master Mark Wiley. His books show a new way to perpetuate this unique martial art and make it known to the world. It is my pleasure to be part of *Mastering Eskrima Disarms* and to help perpetuate the martial arts of the Philippines.”

— GM Mike Del Mar
Del Mar School of Filipino Martial Arts

“My brother Mark Wiley, and fellow master under the late GGM Angel O. Cabales, congratulations on your newest masterful documentation of the Filipino martial arts. I am sure the world is going to appreciate yet another one of your great contributions. Long Live the Legacy.”

— GM Darren G. Tibon
President, *United States Filipino Martial Arts Federation*

“I, as Grandmaster of DeCuerdas-Diestro system from Stockton, California, approve of and recommended Master Mark Wiley and his new book, *Mastering Eskrima Disarms*.”

— GM Arthur Gonzalez
President, *Kilohana Martial Arts Association*

“Structure, alignment, angling, flow, timing, movement, distancing, recognition, leveraging, sensitivity and coordinated motion are all key principles of the Filipino martial arts, and are found within disarms. THIS is what makes Mark V. Wiley’s new book so interesting, as these details are explained in vast detail!”

— Prof. Dan Anderson
Author, *Modern Arnis for the Millennium*

“Mark Wiley’s books are classics in the field. His research is thorough, his teachers are legends and his skills are unmistakable. In short, Mark is the man.”

— GM Joe Breidenstein
10th Dan, *International Modern Arnis Federation*

“A master of martial arts, a learned doctor of holistic medicine, a successful writer and publisher, a father of two, and a dear friend to many, Grand Master Guru Dr. Mark V. Wiley is a prime example of a true craftsman “par excellence” in all that he does, and has achieved over a substantial period of time. Considered by many to be one of the leading authorities within the sacred and coveted field of Filipino martial arts, Grand Master Mark V. Wiley will never fall within the range of just being another mediocre writer or historian.

“Because of his many tedious long years as a keen researcher within the area of the various distinctive methods of Filipino martial arts, GM Mark V. Wiley is now in the eyes of many martial arts practitioners one of the primary authorities of clarity when it comes to a better understanding of the underlying principles and foundation that give to the various FMA their true value and inherent validity.

“Writing his first book about the fine art of Cabaes Serrada Escrima 20 years ago, GM Mark V. Wiley became one of the primary catalysts and resources that set the stage for much of today’s success that this particular art form and its teachers are now experiencing around the world. I, personally, owe a great deal of gratitude to GM Mark V. Wiley, as he has taught me the value of true friendship. Additionally, I am proud of all that GM Wiley has accomplished in his many years as a dedicated Serrada Escrima mentor to many.

“*Mastering Eskrima Disarms* presents many fascinating insights into the various arts covered, and gives vital insights into the many ‘master minds’ who created these exotic combative styles of martial arts.

“Thank you so very much Grand Master Guru Dr. Mark V. Wiley, for once again producing another essential and revolutionary book of martial knowledge by writing and completing this Proust-like magnum opus, “Remembrance of Things Past.” Always keep it flowing my fellow Brother in Arms.”

— SGM Anthony Davis
Co-Founder, *World Serrada Escrima Federation*

“Mark V. Wiley has a deep understanding of Eskrima. One really must be at a certain level themselves in order to fully appreciate it!”

— Sensei Bob Sykes
Editor, *Martial Arts Illustrated*

“Having traveled across the world to train under many master-level teachers, I was especially excited, and surprised to have met Dr. Mark Wiley and become an instant Integrated Eskrima convert. Like many other practitioners and teachers, over the years I had accumulated a fair share of “seminar” arnis and had developed my own teaching methods, imparting the approach from my experiences in other martial arts. After training with Dr. Mark and experiencing the Mastery he possess in the art, I knew in comparison there was little, if any, value in what I had learned previously on the subject.

“Dr. Mark’s skills are impeccable, and the clarity of his teaching methods is exceptional, not only in Filipino martial arts, but also among the best overall I have ever encountered in nearly 30 years of intense training and research—including in the Philippines.

“I find Dr. Mark’s courage to put the lessons of his own masters into a format that fully utilizes the simplest and most direct movements refreshing in a world often intentionally obfuscated by those who teach their material, often with a goal of stretching out the training, maximizing instructor profits, and retaining the best material for those in the arts decades, not weeks.

“My exposure to the methods and approach of Integrated Eskrima has helped my development in other martial arts in ways far too numerous to mention here. Not only have I learned a tremendous amount about the art and history of Eskrima from Dr. Mark’s teachings, but I owe him a debt of gratitude for the knowledge I have been able to apply to my other martial studies.

“Dr. Mark Wiley’s humility, coupled with his desire to promote his teachers and othermasters, has unfortunately limited his desire to present to the world the fruits of his own labor. Dr. Wiley’s new book, *Mastering Eskrima Disarms*, successfully presents his own insights into the training model of Eskrima and its disarming techniques, while also humbly including other masters and their systems. No one does this but Master Mark V. Wiley, and he does it often. I believe he is a true gem in the field as a practitioner, innovator and instructor.

“I am beyond excited to see this project come to fruition, and hope that it is received by an audience ready to digest its profoundness. Those willing to take a fresh, unbiased look at its contents cannot avoid being, in some way, transformed.”

— Sensei Russ L. Smith
Okinawa Kobudo Doushi Rensei-Kai

“No matter how strong you may be, you cannot break barriers with strength alone.”

—*Raymond Tobosa*

“Strong leaders are men of tempered character and an unwavering constancy of purpose.”

—*Herminio Binas*

MASTERING ESKRIMA DISARMS

MARK V. WILEY



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The author and publisher of this book are NOT RESPONSIBLE in any manner whatsoever for any injury that may result from practicing the techniques and/or following the instructions given within. Since the physical activities described herein may be too strenuous in nature for some readers to engage in safely, it is essential that a physician be consulted prior to training.

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Edited by Kellie Bach
Cover by Tyler Rea

DEDICATION

For my children, Alex and Brooke. Everything I do is for them.

For Kellie, for believing in me and giving me unconditional love and support.

For the past masters of Filipino martial arts who, over the generations, have developed and perfected their craft through trial and error and injury, for the benefit of practitioners in modern times. We come to learn about ourselves and test out spirits because of them.

For the late Florence Takeda, the woman behind the 'look' of the classic Tuttle books on Asia. Her influence is felt far and wide in the publishing field. She was a lovely lady and she taught me much.



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FOREWORD

I like to tell people there are two Mark V. Wiley's running around. There is the Mark Wiley the martial arts public knows. This Mark V. Wiley has written no less than seven books on Filipino martial arts (12 books in total), hundreds of articles, as well as having served as book editor for Tuttle Publishing and Unique Publications and in various editorial positions with *Martial Arts Illustrated*, *Martial Arts Legends* and the *Journal of Asian Martial Arts*.

From these books and magazines it is widely known that he is one of the 16 people issued a masters certificate from the late Grand Master Angel Cabales. He has taught seminars in the USA, Europe and Asia as well as having traveled and trained in the Philippines on no less than 15 separate occasions, not to mention his multiple trips to Malaysia, Singapore, Taiwan and Hong Kong and having lived in Japan. This is the public Mark Wiley.

The less well-known Mark Wiley has teaching credentials in Biñas Dynamic Arnis (GM Herminio Biñas), Kalis Ilustrisimo (GM Antonio Ilustrisimo), Estalilla Kabaroan Eskrima (GM Ramiro Estalilla), Lightning Scientific Arnis (GM Benjamin Luna Lema), Cinco Tero Arnis (GM Carlos Escorpizo), Modern Arnis (GM Remy Presas) as well as in Ngo Cho Kun (GM Alex Co) and Wing Chun Kuen (GM Robert Chu). And these are just the senior teaching credentials he has earned in his 34 years in the arts.

What many martial artists do not know about Mark V. Wiley is that he is a doctor of both Oriental and alternative medicines, with decades of experience and qualifications in acupuncture, TuiNa, clinical QiGong, herbal medicine, Thai Yoga massage and muscle energy technique. He also holds a master's degree in health care management. As an undergraduate he earned a bachelor's degree in applied sociology with a minor in medical anthropology, during which time he conducted research into home-based health care systems in Scandinavia, and wrote papers on ethnomedicine in Africa, Melanesia and China, and on various forms of magic, ritual and rites of passage in Southeast Asia and New Guinea. He also helped classify Philippine martial artifacts at University of Pennsylvania's Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology. He also holds an Associate's Degree in Small Business Management.

In working with Mark I have found him to be a progressive thinker in the realm of Filipino martial arts. Being a former karate champion, to me this is where the rubber meets the road. In talking and working with Mark I find that although we have different backgrounds we have one major thing in common—we work with the underlying principles of our arts rather than just collecting techniques from whatever sources we can find. So

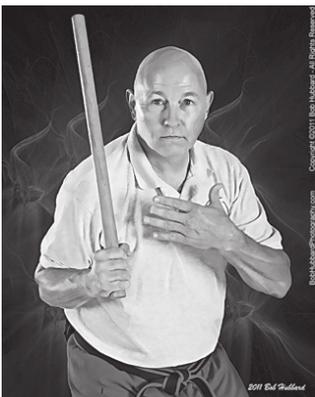
why make such a fetish about one aspect of eskrima and write a book on disarms?

One answer could be it is better to take away your opponent's weapon than to continually face him. Another answer is that in a higher ethical realm it is better to disarm your opponent than to damage or destroy him. Another answer is that Dr. Mark likes disarms and is knowledgeable enough to write a book on them. In fact, not only has he gained a vast amount of personal experience at the hands of dozens of masters in the Philippines and the United States, but he has interviewed them all at length about the concepts and methods behind the applications of their systems. This treasure trove of knowledge is expressed within the pages of this book in a way that has not before been seen.

What answers the question for me is that when one gets over the anxiety of self-defense—the “can I protect myself?” anxiety—one can get into what makes a martial art tick. When this happens one can actually proceed to mastery. That much is obvious. What is not so obvious is that the art of disarming is actually a microcosm for the entirety of Filipino martial arts. That is to say, the combination of the various parts of the body acting in a coordinated effort, as opposed to segmenting or using only one or two parts of the body to execute. Structure, alignment, angling, flow, timing, movement, distancing, recognition, leveraging, sensitivity and coordinated motion are all key principles of the Filipino martial arts, and are found within disarms. THIS is what makes Mark Wiley's new book so interesting, as these details are explained in vast detail!

Mastering Eskrima Disarms is one for beginners who want to learn some moves to add to their repertoire. This book is also for experienced teachers who want to delve deeper into the depths of understanding Filipino weapon fighting. This book has something for everybody and I am fortunate to have been able to read the advance manuscript... and also to be involved in the photographic demonstrations!

This one is a keeper!



*Prof. Dan Anderson
6th Dan, Modern Arnis
Grandmaster, MA 80 Arnis*

INTRODUCTION

Within the pantheon of martial art skills are techniques of disarming. These are methods for removing weapons from an armed opponent. Disarms are an effective means to an end, but they are not an end in themselves. There are many who profess that disarms are too difficult to pull-off in real life, and thus should not be studied. I disagree. Disarms are effective—if properly understood and trained. It is incomplete knowledge and understanding of concepts and principles that leads to poor disarming skills, misapplication of technique and frustration among some practitioners.

To become skilled at executing disarms, where and when you want (rather than by chance), you must have a working knowledge of fighting ranges, modes of engagement, positioning, timing, joint immobilization and anatomy (body structure).

In the Philippines, disarms are often referred to as *agaw* (“disarms”), with little inclination for the naming of specific methods. As the masters demonstrate techniques, many just say, “You can do like this; like that; like this one; and that one.” Sometimes they number their disarms, but the numbering often changes with each training session. Even when disarm names and numbers remain consistent, they demonstrate seemingly never-ending permutations of them. An innate understanding of the how’s, when’s, what’s, and why’s permeates their movements. The masters operate from a tacit conceptual understanding of the disarming skill.

In the West, the story is different. Here we are fond of organizing and classifying things. We do this with our martial arts, and while it has helped these arts to be passed on (a good thing), the memorization of method has also stalled many practitioners’ progress (a bad thing). A short list of adjectives for disarms are in wide use in the West, such as: snake, strip, vine, quick release, lightning, self-rebounding, stripping, lever, and so on. Too much training time is often spent practicing disarming sequences against specific angles of attack while not enough time is spent on understanding the disarm concepts themselves. Yet the concepts are what give one the understanding of how to apply disarms in an unlimited number of scenarios. It is impossible to memorize every technique against every possible scenario, which accounts for the flawed premise of that method of study.

A continuum of skill in disarming is seen among practitioners of the different Filipino martial art styles. The Philippine method can make learning of minutia and memorization of techniques difficult, especially for Westerners. The masters show quantity of examples, and the examples often change. They are often teaching their experience of how to disarm, while not offering a clear means to acquire the skill. In the East, *experience* is

often shown through *action*, while in the West it is often described in *words*. (This book is an example of this!)

In the West the categorization of disarming methods into several groupings is vastly limiting. The line between one type and another is often blurred, as many disarms actually hold more than one characteristic. Moreover, while there are certainly masters well known for their disarming abilities, there appears to be an over abundance of mediocre practitioners of this particular skill set. This may be due to a lack of understanding of the why's and when's as a result of too much emphasis placed on the what's and how's.

Both Eastern and Western approaches need to come together for practitioners to gain a fully articulated understanding of the disarming skill. It is my hope that this book will clearly illustrate and explain the means, methods, concepts and theories of disarming that are necessary to master these techniques and transcend the limitations of putting number and name before form and function. Or, at the very least, use name and number as a means to inform and understand form and function. In an effort to effectively group disarms for ease of study, this book shows examples within *modes of engagement*. Engagement Modes are a concept I developed as an alternative to using angle of attack or technique name as the primary teaching tool. Within each "mode" are found the angle, technique, footwork and distance structures, thus broadening the training platform.

There are hundreds of different disarming techniques in eskrima, some are overly complicated and involve many movements, difficult arm locks and, most importantly, a cooperative opponent who is neither trying to injure you nor hold his weapon with a firm grip. The disarming techniques illustrated in this book are proven, simple and do not require cooperation from an opponent to work. Disarms that take more than a few movements to execute, as well as those requiring developed skills in advanced joint locking have been omitted from the instructional portions of this manual. (Although many are illustrated in *Part 3*). When it comes to disarming methods that may be relied upon for their life-saving capabilities (rather than art or demonstration), the fewer the movements and the simpler the technique, the more effective they will be.

To help the reader follow and apply the supporting structures of the techniques illustrated in *Part 2*, I have done four things:

1. Included enough photos per technique to show the transition movements between the initial defense and the disarm.
2. Set two sticks between me and my attacker illustrating "medium range" so you can better see how distance is changing during each technique, while range often remains the same.
3. Included a reference box with each technique description, giving a quick guide of the mode, range, positional gate, joint control, footwork method and grip release concept of each disarming technique.
4. Removed Filipino terminology from the concepts and techniques to reduce confusion over what any particular system calls something or how they define a specific term.

This book is divided into three distinct sections. *Part One: The Foundation*, presents information that is necessary to support the application of safe and effective disarms. *Chapter 1* presents nine essential principles of disarms. These are the conceptual rules upon which you may base the executions of your disarms. If you can begin following, or at least mindfully considering these points in your practice, the end result will be more successful. *Chapter 2* defines what an effective disarm is, and discusses the five supporting structures that make possible the disarming techniques themselves. These include ranges of engagement, modes of engagement, positional gates, joint control concepts and footwork methods relevant to disarming. *Chapter 3* completes the preliminary information with a discussion of the five disarming styles, or grip release concepts, used to remove a weapon from an opponent's grip.

Part Two: Fundamental Disarms, presents photographs and descriptions of 42 basic disarming techniques found within Integrated Eskrima, and FMA in general. These are not complicated or fancy demonstration techniques, but techniques that follow the conceptual principles and definition of "safe and effective," as defined within this book. Disarms in this section are grouped into five categories, based on the four modes of weapon engagement and empty-hand techniques. The technique examples include single stick, double sticks, sword, sword and dagger, knife and empty hands.

Part Three: Special Disarming Section, is a bonus for an instructional book like this. As a result of my comprehensive research and archive of photographs of practitioners and masters, I am able to include here disarming techniques from over 30 different eskrima styles, as demonstrated by masters in those styles. This section offers the reader with a keen eye the ability to compare and analyze these systems' respective disarming techniques against the basic material in the book, the other systems presented herein, as well as the techniques of their own art. Since many of the masters in this section are no longer with us, the photographic depictions of their art here is the only place many will be able to "see" them in action.

Please note that all of the theoretical and technical information and detail presented in *Parts 1 & 2* are from the curriculum of Integrated Eskrima, as developed by the author and propagated through Integrated Eskrima International. The discussion of the art in these sections is based on the author's Integrated Modular Training Methodology (IMTM), and does not assume other masters utilize the same nomenclature or methods of explanation of technique. However, the reader will notice how all FMA techniques easily fall into the paradigm presented.

No book is produced in a vacuum, and certainly this one wasn't. I offer my appreciation to Dan Anderson, Ian Fusco and Steve Le for posing opposite me in the instructional photos while alternately acting as photographer. After two botched photo sessions, the book includes the third complete set of photos and these were taken "in motion" at regular speed with a motor-drive digital camera. I also offer my sincere gratitude to Russ Smith for reading the first draft and offering valuable feedback to help improve the book.

For the disarming techniques demonstrated in *Part 3*, I would like to thank the

following masters for allowing me to photograph them or to use their photographs in my body of work: Alejandro Abrian, Rogelio Alberto, Dan Anderson, Crispulo Atillo, Narrie Babao, Abondio Baet, Reynaldo Baldemor, Ron Balicki, Michael T. Bates, Herminio Biñas, Robert Castro, Anthony Davis, Mike Del Mar, Tony Diego, Beverly M.G. Espedido, Joel M.G. Espedido, Ramiro Estalilla, Rey Galang, Leo Giron, Art Gonzalez, Antonio Ilustrisimo, Jason Inay, Diana Lee Inosanto, Halford Jones, Porferio Lanada, Lindsey Largausa, Eddie Lastra, Rene Latosa, Benjamin Luna Lema, Dan Medina, Carlos Navarro, Alex Ngoi, Lucy O'Mally, Pat O'Mally, Isidro Pambuan, Raffy Pambuan, Ely Pasco, Ramon Rubia, Ron Saturno, Tony Somera, Edgar Sulite, Sam Tendencia, Darren Tibon, Roberto Torres, Jerson Tortal, Jose Viñas, Florendo Visitacion, Wade Williams, Elmer Ybañez.

I offer my heartfelt gratitude also to Alex Co, Robert Chu, Curtis Wong, Al Iba, Jose Fraguas, Greg Stevenson, Tyler Rea, Alan Orr, Bob Sykes, Steven Wang, Joe Breidenstein, Joel Juanitas, Phil Matedne, Dennis Tosten, Bot Jocano, Michael Schwarz, Lorne Bernard, Elliot Monds, Herb and Elena Borkland, my sister Mary Armstrong and my parents, Drs. William and Mary Wiley, for their continued support and encouragement.

I hope you enjoy reading this book as much as I've enjoyed writing it. The best advice I can give is to slow down your acquisition of techniques, and replace it with a study of the concepts and principles that make those techniques effective.

Enjoy the journey!



*Dr. Mark V. Wiley
Publisher, Tambuli Media
President, Integrated Eskrima Systems*

PART 1 THE FOUNDATION



Benjamin Luna Lema of Lightning Scientific Arnis



1

PRINCIPLES OF EFFECTIVE DISARMING

Every inherently effective self-defense technique is guided by principles, whether or not its practitioners know them. Eskrima styles in general, and their disarming skills in particular, depend on principles to guide correct application of movement and technique. Have you ever wondered why sometimes a certain technique works well for you, and at other times it fails? The answer, most likely, is that you did not apply the correct principle to its use. In other words, you applied it at the wrong time, or in the wrong range, or within the wrong technique. As a result, the technique (function) did not follow the principle (form), and thus was unsuccessful in its purpose (application). Therefore, it can be said that when your technique worked, it was by accident. When it comes to facing an armed opponent, doing things on purpose is the only way to do them. Knowing the principles and concepts that support the technique is the way to purposefully apply techniques. If you're not doing this, then you are merely "swinging wood."

In eskrima, principles are not generally categorized or written down as they are, for example, in many Chinese martial arts. Instead, they are expressed in the movements and applications of the art's practitioners. While many eskrimadores can effortlessly execute their art, the techniques are not well articulated in their verbal teachings. They know what to do, and can tell you what they are doing, but they often are unsure of how to explain the reasons why. More often than not, this is because the older masters cared more about applying their art than thinking, talking or writing about it—and this is how the art has been passed down.

In the Philippines, eskrima lessons are often carried out in the method known as *muestracion*, where the teacher demonstrates and students follow. Often times, the teacher shows countless variations of a single technique concept, yet not much detail is given and so it must be gleaned through critical observation, probing questions and experience over time. Unfortunately, many practitioners are followers and not critical thinkers who examine the inner workings of what it is they are doing. *Being able to repeat someone else's technique is not an indicator of mastery of the technique itself.*

Contrary to popular belief, techniques are not "the secret" of martial arts. Techniques are merely examples, or physical demonstrations, of martial principles. If the principle upon which a technique is based is solid, and the technique is applied following its principles, then the technique will be effective. On the contrary, if a technique is applied

incorrectly because the principle of the technique is not known or understood, its chances of success against a skilled opponent are greatly diminished. Again, the disarm might work by accident or by fortunate happenstance, but then it may fail, too. In short: techniques are less important than the principles upon which they are based. This is true for all martial art techniques.

While disarms are not necessarily “essential” to surviving an encounter, they are a useful skill set that may save your life. The trouble is, disarms are difficult to do well against an unwilling opponent—i.e., one who is firmly holding his weapon and intent upon injuring you with it. Because teachers and students of eskrima spend so much time training together in cooperative settings, an accurate sense of actually applying disarms often is neither gained nor fully appreciated. Parenthetically, I would say the same applies to joint locking techniques.

Below is a discussion of nine of the key principles upon which safe and effective disarming techniques can be built. These are the principles on which the disarms illustrated in *Parts 2* and *3* of this book are based. Some are strategies while others are concepts that come together to inform the application of eskrima disarms.

KEY DISARMING PRINCIPLES

1. Know Your Weapon Characteristics...

Although students of eskrima practice disarms against various types of edged and impact weapons, they're often done rote. That is, since they know what weapon their partner is using, and they know which disarm to do, they can do it with their eyes closed. Many practitioners do not take the time to become familiar with the various weapon characteristics which are necessary to master the art of applying the correct disarm to a given weapon. This is vital to react appropriately in the unprepared moment they may be attacked. While a knife disarm may look like a stick disarm, they are not identical. Because the weapons have different characteristics (e.g., one is sharp, the other is blunt; one is round, the other flat), the weapon position and body dynamic must change accordingly. This is vital.

2. Neutralize the Attack...

The basic goal of disarming is to force your opponent to release his weapon. The idea of snatching the attacking limb out of the air in the middle of a real attack, and then disarming the weapon, seems unlikely. It is difficult to do in real-time and against an uncooperative opponent. However, with mastery of timing, position, range, your own root balance and the ability to break the opponent's balance, the technique can be effective. Because all of these *supporting structures* need to come into play effectively, disarms take time to master and one can only do so under a progressive training method. As a matter of safety and to

ensure effectiveness, it is advisable that disarms not be attempted if the attack itself has not first been neutralized. Neutralizing an attack can be done by stepping off the line of attack or by putting an obstruction (block or parry) in its way to stop, slow or redirect it.

Once the weapon is neutralized the practitioner must release the opponent's grip. This can be accomplished either by striking his hand or wrist with your weapon, or taking the wrist to its maximum rotation—thus stressing the ligaments and tendons, weakening the grip and creating pain. Once the wrist and elbow joints are locked and you're in a safe position, the grip is released and the weapon can be removed in any number of ways. (The five fundamental grip-release concepts are discussed in *Chapter 3*).

3. Control the Opponent...

To effectively disarm an opponent you must gain control of their weapon so that it may safely be neutralized, contained and removed. This can be achieved by blocking or redirecting it, grabbing it or seizing the attacking limb. In disarms other than the so-called “defanging the snake” (Mode 1) method, the attacking limb must first be controlled (immobilized) for the weapon to be removed safely.

To decrease the chance of disarm failure you must seize the attacking limb quickly. You must then lock the joints in sequence to secure the limb, turn the opponent's body away from you, break his balance, and make it extremely difficult for him to counter or even move while you remove his weapon.

Without sufficient control of the opponent and his attacking limb, he may easily neutralize or counter your disarming technique. As long as the opponent can move his joints, he can maneuver out of any disarm or joint lock and strike you in the open spaces created by you when you occupy both of your limbs against one of his.

4. Maintain Your Own Structure...

The term *structure* refers to body posture, alignment and position in relation to the opponent, and the juxtaposition of your and your opponent's arms and weapons. For your disarms to be done safely and effectively, you must assume and maintain proper structure. When you lose your structure or your opponent is able to “break” your structure (e.g., compromise your balance and position) you may lose your disarm and/or be countered while attempting to execute it.

Being in control of your own body and weapon positions at the time of disarm execution is crucial. Even more crucial is the ability to hold your ground, even while facing the opponent's strongest position.

5. Know Where You Are at All Times...

Disarms must be executed in the proper range designated for that specific method of disarming. Executing medium range disarms in close or long range, for example, leaves too

many opportunities (gaps or openings) for your opponent to counter attack, or for you simply to miss the disarm altogether.

Without proper visual assessment of your fighting range in any given moment in time, and without the knowledge of which disarms can best be executed in which range, the effectiveness of your disarms will be compromised. Like eskrima's fundamental counter techniques, its disarms are tied to range and weapon type. Know which disarms work best in which range, then train to remain in that range while executing them—even while changing position.

Whenever possible, it is preferable to maneuver to the *outside gate* of the opponent's attacking arm. This provides a safe position wherein the attacker's second arm/weapon is far enough out of range that there is less chance of being countered, struck, grabbed or stabbed while attempting to disarm the lead weapon. If a disarm begins in the inside gate of the opponent's arm, you could maneuver to the outside gate during the disarm or right after the weapon is released. This is the safest position for you to launch your counter strikes. Just because you successfully disarmed an opponent of his weapon doesn't mean you ended the disarm in a safe position, or even conclude the encounter. Safety is a must!

6. Don't Hesitate or Struggle...

One of the easiest ways to fail at a disarm and be struck in the process of applying one, is to force the disarm to happen. That is, to try and turn the opponent's wrist, to struggle to lock his limb, to pry until his weapon releases. Safe disarms happen naturally and with normal amounts of effort. You must take a disarm when the opportunity presents itself. When you hesitate or when you try to apply a disarm in an inappropriate moment, you are forcing it. A disarm that is forced is never as safe, or as fast, or as effective as a disarm that is taken.

Disarms should be executed with conviction or not at all. When you recognize you are in the right position, in the right range, and are within the right time then you must seize the moment and apply your disarm as if it cannot fail. If you do not commit to the technique, you may not be successful. Defeat can come if you hesitate or struggle with a disarm because it didn't turn out the way you had expected. You must learn to allow the possible outcomes and continue on with your counter techniques regardless of outcomes.

Self-doubt causes hesitation and hesitation wastes precious time and can make you lose an otherwise "survivable" encounter. Proper training will instill the correct muscle memory and reflex response to allow disarms to fall into place organically. Over time you will gain confidence in the techniques themselves and in your ability to execute them properly, safely and effectively.

7. Know When to Let Go...

If you attempt a disarm, but miss... If you seize the attacking limb, but the opponent is in a stronger position... If while executing the disarm, you are countered... you must let go of the disarm, both physically and mentally. Do not struggle with it. Do not force it.

If everything is in place the disarm will be effective. If things are not in place, or if the opponent is skilled and executes a deft counter move, then you must not fight for the disarm. Doing so not only wastes energy, but also can put you in a precarious position.

When disarming, if you remain focused on the intention to disarm, and you are detached from its result, you will know when to take a disarm and when to let it go. The key in both instances is to *go with the flow*. Take them as they come, release them as they go, flow and move between counter techniques and disarming methods. There are so many disarming techniques, and counter techniques, that to “stick” on one that is not immediately effective is a race toward failure. In short, when a disarm is not immediate, you must let it go and move on with your counter attack. Another disarm may present itself later. Or it may not. Either way, surviving the encounter is what is important. Disarms are not the end itself but one means to any possible number of ends.

8. Less Is More...

This adage holds so much value in the martial arts. In the case of disarming techniques, less “movement” and less “quantity of moves” within a technique, the safer and more effective the technique will be. Disarms should be brief, containing four or fewer motions (one or two is best) to release the opponent’s weapon. There simply is no time in an actual altercation for more movements as these steal what little time one has to force his opponent to lose his weapon.

One of the main trouble areas one can get into while disarming is the amount of space they allow an opponent to utilize during their counter. Disarming motions must be tight. The smaller the circle of movements, the faster the disarm, the tighter the angle, the less chance of a reversal or counter, and the more likely the disarm will be effective. Keep disarms short, tight and controlled.

9. Don’t Strike Yourself...

As basic as it sounds, it is essential that you not strike yourself with your own weapon or with your opponent’s weapons while disarming! It is so easy to be caught up in the arm motion of the disarming method that you lose track of the trajectory of your weapon and the opponent’s weapon. This is especially important when executing ejection disarms where the opponent’s weapon is sent flying from his grip. Practice and attention to weapon characteristics and control of structure are very important.

DANGEROUS ASSUMPTIONS

Now that we've looked at some of the principles that underlie safe and effective disarming techniques, let's look at some of the dangerous assumptions some students and practitioners bring to the application of their disarms. By becoming aware of these, you can recognize their existence and then do your best to avoid them in your training. In the end, you react in real life as you train in class.

It is fair to say that the majority of disarming techniques taught in eskrima are applied in medium range. The obvious reason is that there simply are more defensive counter techniques in this range than the others. As a result, it is quite common for practitioners unwittingly to (mis)execute disarming techniques meant for either long range or close range, while they are in medium range. This accounts for why one's disarm is countered or made ineffective against an opponent who is resisting or who has mastered range control. It's dangerous to assume that *all* disarms are effective in more than one range. They are not.

Be careful also not to assert that all disarming techniques must be "tight." While this is true to an extent, *tight* is a *relative concept* and is not indicative of a technique's safety or effectiveness. *Tightening the action* of a disarming technique is often necessary to control the opponent's weapon-holding limb, but being *tighter-in* or *closer* to the opponent can leave you in range of his second hand. Only when a disarm is done in the proper range and gate and with the appropriate opponent structural control, is it time to consider whether or not it should be *tighter*. Never put one concept (like "tightness") above all others. Nothing happens in a vacuum. Concepts as a group are the scaffolding that give structure and strength to every technique, and one individual concept does not make a scaffold.

Many styles teach disarms as techniques that follow technical steps, like (for example) block the weapon, twist the arm, release the weapon. But there is much more to disarms than that. This method, by itself, brings too many assumptions to the encounter. It assumes that the practitioner was able to do four things: 1) maneuver into correct range; 2) stop the full force of the opponent's strike; 3) prevent the opponent from resisting; and 4) keep the opponent from countering with his second hand or weapon. Those four assumptions are far too many to bring to an encounter with an armed assailant. It is important to understand that the disarming technique itself is not all you need to focus on and master. It is only the "shell" of the overall technique. Disarming techniques are the "main event," but without the supporting structures there is nothing to support the disarm to make it both safe and effective in real time and under real circumstances.

To be both safe and effective against an opponent who is trying to hurt you and not let go of his weapon, there is a basic sequence of disarming action. This sequence is:

- **Strike opponent... while in the proper range.**
- **Control opponent's limb... while moving to a safe gate.**
- **Break opponent's balance... while maintaining your own structure.**
- **Disarm opponent's weapon... while aware of its characteristics.**
- **Follow-up and finish opponent... while not losing your nerve.**

TRAINING PROGRESSIONS

It is common when executing disarms in class and demonstrations for practitioners to do their flash disarms while the feeder (attacking partner) merely stands unmoving, his strike stopping at precisely the point of impact, and finishing too far away to actually hit the target. There is no follow-through, no power past the impact point, no counter and no (or little) allowance of what would otherwise be a natural attacker reaction under such circumstances.

Cooperative training is vital to the beginner's learning curve. But, disarm training must progress to something more akin to the reality of what may be faced in actuality. Simple steps can be taken by the "attacking" partner to accomplish this.

- **Being in the proper range to actually be able to strike the defender.**
- **Increase striking speed and power with each repetition.**
- **Following through on strikes, so the defender must actually stop or redirect the strikes, or else be struck.**
- **Reacting naturally to the defender's technique, rather than posing.**

Practitioners can learn a lot about their art and themselves with such a training progression. It is simple, but allows the drill feeder to lead the session and help the defending partner increase his timing, technique and structure over time. There are many more ways in which training progressions can be developed in class, and each system and teacher will have their preference and focus. The point here is that there should be a progression in place for students to advance their skill on purpose and not just hope for the best when the time comes to use it.



2

SUPPORTING STRUCTURES

This chapter offers the “meat and potatoes” of what makes disarms effective in live application. It looks at the *supporting structures* that in addition to the disarming actions (grip release concepts) themselves also need to be mastered. Again, while disarms are the “main event,” or primary visible technique of taking a weapon away from an armed opponent, they are only part of what comes into play to make that happen. Disarming techniques need support to work safely and effectively. Disarming techniques done in a vacuum, or independent of their supporting structures, have limited value and offer low net positive results. The primary supporting structures for disarms are: ranges of engagement, modes of engagement, positional gates, limb control concepts and footwork methods. Each are discussed in this chapter



RANGES OF ENGAGEMENT

Executing a disarm in the range in which it is intended is perhaps the most basic, yet most overlooked, principle in applying eskrima disarms. Many styles teach a set of disarms and then practice them against various strikes or angles of attack, with little (or no) attention paid to the most-effective distance that needs to be maintained between practitioner and opponent. While many eskrima techniques can be utilized in more than one range, they often require a different footwork or position to make them effective in different ranges. This is especially true of disarms, where the practitioner's range must often change during the action of the disarm—from setup to application to follow-up. Range is a big deal. Don't dismiss its importance. The three ranges of engagement are described below.

Long Range

This is the furthest distance at which either you or your opponent can be stuck by the other's weapon. It is measured by facing your partner with fully extended arm and weapon, where only the top inches of your weapons can touch the other person's wrist. In this range your weapon can engage and redirect your opponent's weapon, or it can strike his weapon-holding hand or forearm directly. However, your rear hand is too far away to check the opponent's weapon hand, and your weapon is too far away to strike the opponent's body (without leaning forward). The disarms that are most safe and effective in long range are of the Mode 1 (direct strike) methods.



Long Range Measure



Leo Giron Demonstrates Long Range on Mark V. Wiley

Medium Range

This is the distance between you and your opponent where either of you can be struck by the other's weapon. In this range the rear hand can check or lock the weapon-holding hand, but is too far to strike the opponent's body (without twisting or leaning). This range is measured by facing your partner with arms extended and weapons held up at 90-degrees and with the wrists overlapped. In this range, your weapon can redirect or block the opponent's weapon, your rear hand can check, parry or pass the opponent's weapon/hand, and your weapon can directly strike the opponent's body.



MediumRange Measure



Dr. Jopet Laraya Demonstrates Medium Range

Close Range

This is the closest distance you can be to your opponent and effectively maneuver your weapons. This range is measured by facing your partner with arms extended, weapons held up at 90-degrees, with your wrist in line with your partner's shoulder. In this range both your weapon and rear hand can reach the opponent's body. In this range, techniques of checking, parrying, passing, disarming, locking and moving to the opponent's back are safely utilized.



Close Range Measure



Rene Navarro, LAc Demonstrates Close Range

MODES OF ENGAGEMENT

Modes are pre-defined conditions under which one does or responds to something. I have taken a pan-Philippine perspective of eskrima techniques and categorized them into “modes of engagement.” All eskrima weapon techniques, regardless of system or style, fall into the following four distinct modes:

- 1. Directly strike opponent, without blocking first.**
- 2. Simultaneous supporting hand parry with direct body strike.**
- 3. Weapon intercepts weapon, redirects and counters in one motion.**
- 4. Weapon blocks weapon while hand checks weapon hand.**

The overall idea here is to recognize the importance of knowing which counter positions best support which disarming techniques. Knowing the Mode will offer the platform to train disarms under various circumstances and ranges—as opposed to limiting training to angles of attack. For example, if you are in the midst of a *crossada* (crossing) technique, it is unlikely you will be able to execute a “lever” disarm. Thus, knowing which disarming methods move organically into or from which mode of engagement provides a way not to guess or to force disarms at the wrong time or from the wrong position.

Modes of Engagement allow you to stop thinking about techniques and countering and instead allow you to think about strategy. Within strategy is found timing, placement, beats, movement, control, etc. Modes help clarify this by leading the response along strategic lines, not simply responding to Angle One (for example) with an inside sweep and hoping for the best. Pairing counters against angles of attack is a great teaching tool, but it is not a great way of teaching strategy or of instilling in practitioners a process for strategically overcoming an opponent. You can't just exchange blocks and counters with your opponent all day. At some point the altercation must end. Utilizing a modes framework in training will allow this to happen more purposefully, by approaching technique application strategically.

Each of the four modes is defined below. The lower the number, the more effective (strategically) are the sets of techniques employed within it. Interestingly, the majority of techniques taught in eskrima are found in Mode 4, which poses an interesting question with regard to training method and effectiveness.

Mode 1: Direct Strike to Attacking Limb

The first mode of engaging an opponent is countering by avoiding weapon contact. In Mode 1, only the execution of a direct blow to the opponent's body or attacking limb is done. Mode 1 is the fastest defensive application as there is no time lost between defense and counter and a safe distance can be maintained between you and your opponent. Techniques utilized in Mode 1 require skillful control of distance, timing and footwork. While this mode is most often used in long range, it is equally effective in medium and close ranges and provides the fastest means to end an encounter.

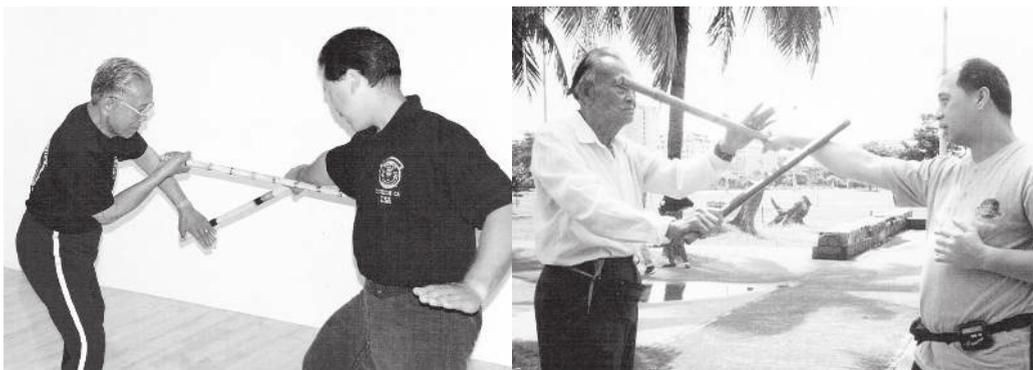


Angel Cabales Applies Mode 1 on Darren Tibon

Jose Mena Applies Mode 1 on Rolly Maximo

Mode 2: Simultaneous Empty-Hand Parry with Weapon Strike

The second mode of engaging an opponent is by simultaneously (but independently) employing both hands in the defense. Mode 2 defenses find the supporting (live) hand parrying, passing or stopping the opponent's weapon or attacking limb, while the weapon directly strikes the opponent. Mode 2 techniques utilize the concept of simultaneous attack and defense, and are effective in all three ranges. However, they do require control of timing and position through the proper application of footwork.



Leo Giron Applies Mode 2 on Tony Somera

Antonio Ilustrisimo Applies Mode 2 on Christopher Ricketts

Mode 3: Weapon Engages Weapon, Redirects and Counters

The third mode of engaging an opponent is by merging with and redirecting the opponent's weapon with your own weapon, all in one continuous motion. In Mode 3 your weapon engages the opponent's weapon and in one motion deflects and/or redirects his weapon and follows with a counter blow. While the supporting (live) hand does not come directly into play with the opponent or his weapon in this mode, it is often used in conjunction with the weapon-holding hand to assist with weapon pressure and redirection. Developed levels of sensitivity, spatial awareness and footwork are essential in safely and effectively executing Mode 3 disarms. This mode is most effective in long and medium ranges, but is also useful in close range so long as there is an awareness of the opponent's "live" hand at all times.



Tony Diego Applies Mode 3 on Topher Ricketts

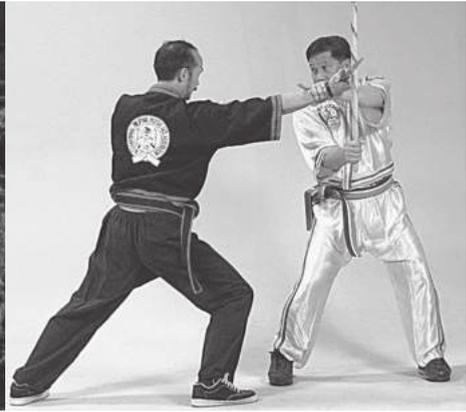
Amado Sunga Applies Mode 3 on Ramiro Estalilla

Mode 4: Weapon and Empty Hand Block Together

The fourth mode of engaging an opponent is simultaneously using both your supporting (live) hand and weapon against the opponent's attacking weapon. Mode 4 defenses comprise the majority of techniques found in eskrima and are most often utilized in medium range. These "two-handed blocks" are generally followed by a counter strike above or below the opponent's weapon-holding hand. Mode 4 techniques require less coordination and timing and therefore are easier for students to learn. While this is the most common defensive method it is also the most dangerous for the practitioner. It is difficult to actually stop an on-coming blow that is done with full force and then expect to have enough time to counter before the opponent initiates a second blow. Given the added stance support necessary to remain balanced when absorbing the shock of strikes in this mode, most of its disarming techniques are executed from a solid and rooted, unmoving stance.



Angel Cabales Applies Mode 4 on Darren Tibon



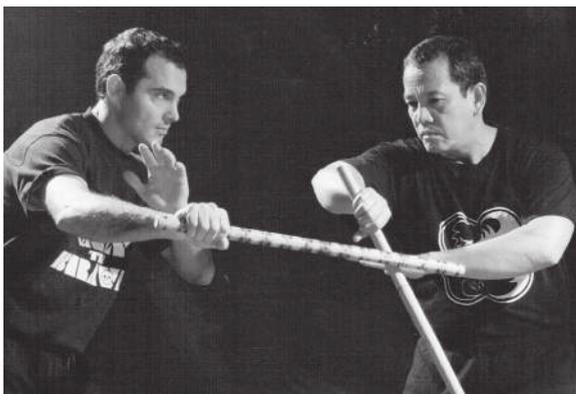
Ernesto Presas Applies Mode 4 on Jose Paman

POSITIONAL GATES

Positional gates are reference points that identify the position of your body relative to the opponent's arms. For simplicity, it is enough to identify just two gates: on the inside and on the outside of the opponent's attacking limb. There are pros and cons to both gates. Being aware of them will help you work toward an effective strategy.

The Inside Gate

The Inside Gate provides the defender with exposure to the majority of the attacker's vital point targets. However, because the defender would be between both of the attacker's limbs, he could find himself relying too much on speed and reflexes, defending attacks and counters from both arms. If the attacker is more skilled or even a bit faster, the results may be negative. Inside gate disarms (especially following Mode 4 defenses) tie up both of the defender's limbs against only one of the opponent's limbs, leaving him exposed for a swift counter blow. Techniques done within the inside gate, therefore, are safest to execute when you can control range, timing and the opponent's attacking limb and structure.



Rey Galang Applies an Inside Gate Block



Pachito Velez Applies an Inside Gate Strike

The Outside Gate

The Outside Gate provides the defender with a number of advantages in an encounter. The position is on the outside of the opponent's attacking limb, which limits the attacker's striking options because of the structure of the elbow joint. The attacker's second hand, which may also be armed, is far enough away from the defender not to pose an immediate threat. The defender can flank to the side and even to the back of the opponent, making the opponent easy to strike with almost no options to defend against those strikes. Controlling the opponent is easiest from the outside gate. On the whole, it is safer for the novice to be on the outside of the opponent's attacking arm.



Jose Mena Strikes from the Outside Gate



Carlito Lanada Strikes from the Outside Gate

With time, practitioners can learn to move back and forth between gates during techniques to better control his location when removing the opponent's weapon and countering. Mastering positional gates increases your opportunity to neutralize the opponent's ability to reverse your disarm and launch his own counter attack.

The goal, therefore, is to move to the outside gate before or during a disarm for your personal safety and to better restrict the opponent's possible counters. If you execute a disarm while in the inside gate, then immediately after the weapon is released you should try to position yourself to the outside gate. If this is not possible, then it is safest for you to control the opponent's attacking arm and body structure with locking techniques, by adjusting range, or with a barrage of counter strikes.

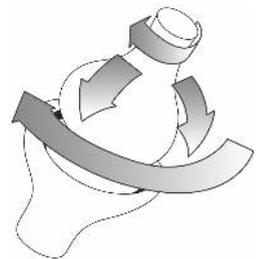
JOINT CONTROL CONCEPTS

Displacing the opponent's body structure by controlling his attacking arm is an essential component of safe and effective disarms. In fact, 80-percent of eskrima's fundamental disarming concepts are dependent on immobilizing and controlling the opponent's attacking limb before releasing his weapon. Disarms must of course be effective, but safety for the practitioner executing them is a must! If you have not first properly locked and controlled the opponent, then you are placing yourself in danger of a potentially life-threatening counter strike. As such, disarms that employ the concepts of joint locking and control work more swiftly and take less effort than techniques where the weapon is removed by sheer force and brute strength.

To immobilize and control an opponent, we must understand the basic mechanics of joints. Joints are the contact points between bones that allow for mechanical movement, support and limited range of motion. A joint's integrity can be compromised by twisting, rotating or pressing it against itself or past its range of motion. This causes stress, pain and injury, which allows you to control the opponent's attacking arm and body structure, helping you to release the weapon from his grip. While there are other joint classifications, for disarming concepts the basics of three types should suffice.

Ball and Socket Joints (Focus on Shoulder)

Ball and Socket Joints are those where the ball end of one bone fits into the socket end of another. These are found in the shoulders and hips and allow movement up and down, left and right, clockwise and counter clockwise. There is plenty of "play" in these joints, making them difficult to lock. When taking the weapon from an opponent's grip, if you can exert direct force back into the shoulder joint, you can limit its free range of movement and thus the opponent's ability to reverse the lock or pivot his torso to counter with his free arm.



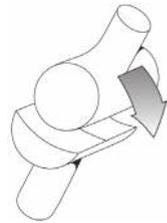
Sam Tendencia Applies a Shoulder Lock



Jerson Tortal Applies a Shoulder Lock

Hinge Joints (Focus on the Elbow)

Hinge joints include the elbows, knees and ankles and allow only forward and backward movement. This makes them easy to lock. Since the elbows must be controlled to keep the opponent from countering your disarm, keeping a 90-degree bend in the elbow joint or applying a 180-degree straight arm bar is optimal for control. Any other angle will allow too much free movement.



Braulio Pedoy elbow locks Dan Medina



Tony Diego applies an Elbow Lock

Ellipsoidal Joints (Focus on the Wrist)

Ellipsoidal joints are those of the wrist, allowing forward and backward bending, side to side movement, and rotation. Because there is so much movement play in the wrists, disarms based in wrist locks are relatively easy to counter. However, correctly applied wrist locks allow for continuous locking of the arm joints for total structural control of the opponent's body. This is ideal.



Jerson Tortal applies a Wrist Lock



Leo Giron applies a Wrist Lock

Having a strategy for achieving position and having a means to place your body in a safe position will go a long way toward helping your defensive techniques and disarms succeed. Footwork methods are what help you achieve the position you want strategically when engaging an armed opponent. Try to master the specifics of how certain steps move you between neighboring ranges while others move your body off the line of attack while keeping you in your current range. Matching footwork with disarms is especially important for executing safe and effective techniques because it places you off the opponent's line of attack, helps you maneuver to the safest gate, and provides a platform to offset the opponent's balance and control his body structure.

Disarms that are achieved by standing still or merely stepping forward, are “mostly effective” against a partner who is cooperative in the following ways:

- **Not following-through on his strike.**
- **Not continuing his strike's force after block contact.**
- **Not changing his position while striking.**
- **Not launching a second attack or strike combination.**

Body placement and spatial relationship are important components of eskrima, especially of its disarming techniques. Stand too close to your opponent and you can be countered or stabbed. Stand too far away, and you can miss the disarm or be pulled off balance. Execute disarms at the wrong angle and everything can go wrong. Utilizing footwork is one of the essential ways to move into distance, to achieve the proper angle, and to achieve a safe position while executing disarming techniques. The Integrated Eskrima method I developed and teach contains 13 different footwork methods, grouped by strategic application. Depending on your positional strategy, the footwork methods provide the ability to:

- **Move you off the line of attack while allowing you to remain in your current range.**
- **Move you to a neighboring range to place yourself in a safer or more advantageous position.**
- **Move between three ranges with bridging concepts that link two or more footwork methods.**

FOOTWORK METHODS

The technique photographs in *Part 2* of this book illustrate the application of using footwork to achieve strategic position. You will notice that many of the techniques utilize two or more stepping actions while executing only one disarm. There are three general reasons for this.

- **One often is not in the safest position for disarming when a “disarmable” strike is approaching. To increase the level of safety, one should seek to *achieve optimal position*.**
- **Even though one may have achieved an optimal position in the moment, the striking angle or the blow’s force may make it highly difficult to complete a disarming technique safely and effectively, without achieving a new position.**
- **One’s position at the start of a disarming technique and his position in the middle and end of that technique are likely to be different IF the attacker is really trying to hit him. That is, if the attacker is striking fully through his target, and repositions by stepping forward or backward or turning sideways while striking, or launches a second strike. Thus, *continuous re-achieving of optimal position* will need to occur, providing correct range for the disarm and safety from his second hand.**

The following five footwork methods offer great advantage for the application of disarming techniques. Two of them—the sliding step and the replacement step—are especially important and widely used with disarms among those eskrima styles that emphasize range. This section is limited to the footwork methods used in the instructional photos in *Part 2*. Each of the footwork methods described below is illustrated with a pair of sticks set in place and with partners extending their arms to present a visual for how range (distance) is changing during each step.

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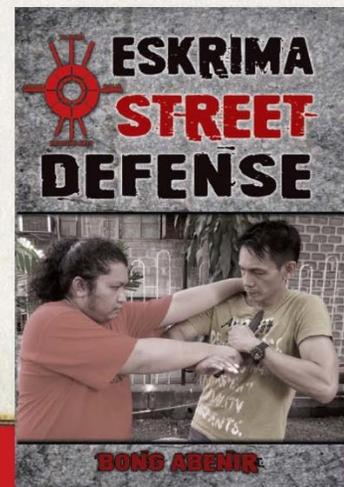
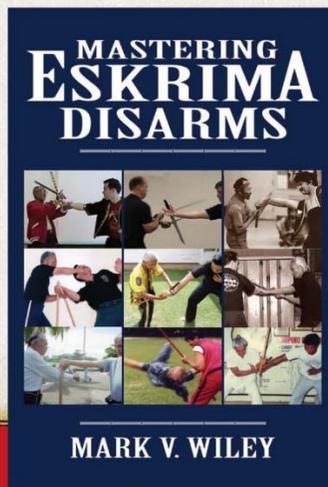
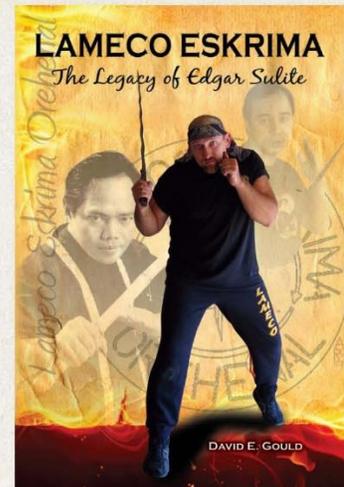
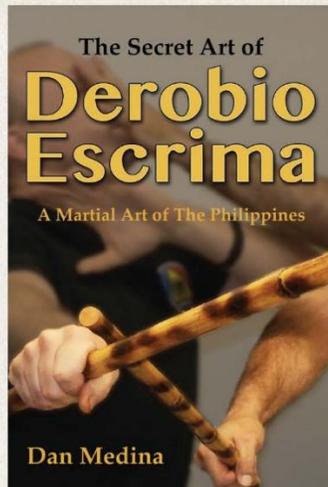
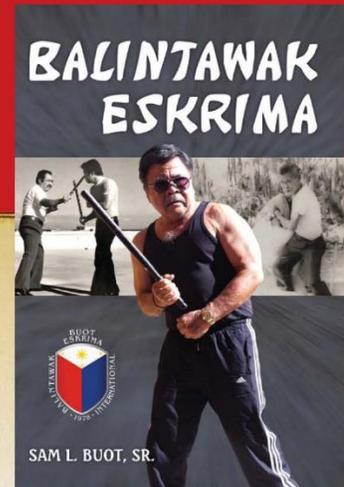


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