

## 5 Must-Dos If You're Confronted With A Knife

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When someone intends to do harm on one side, or defend themselves on the other, they will always look for some kind of weapon that will give them an advantage.

Knives are very popular because they are inexpensive, easy to obtain, maintain, and to use. In fact, even if you can't buy a pre-fabricated knife, you can make one out of many different kinds of materials in just a few hours. If you are interested in protecting yourself, it is very important to know how to stay safe if someone brandishes a knife, or tries to attack you with one.

### Comparisons Between Gun and Knife Attacks

Even though guns are an apex level tool for inflicting injury, there is no getting around the fact that knives are very bit as lethal regardless of who wields them. When you are faced with someone brandishing a knife, it will be somewhat different from having a gun pointed at you.

In those moments, here are some key differences to keep in mind:

- In order to hit the target, the bullet must be in direct line of sight with the target on impact. Once the trigger is pulled, there is no way to change the direction of the bullet using ammo currently available to civilians. As with hunting, someone that intends to shoot will have to lead the target in order to ensure impact. From that perspective, as long as you don't run or move in a way that commits you to a direction when faced with a gun, any sudden move gives you 3 out of 4 directions to turn what would be a fatal shot into a minor one or a complete miss. In addition, once a gunman commits to a specific target lead direction, it is harder to change direction and synchronize with your speed of travel. On the other hand, when someone lunges at you with a knife, they can easily shift their hand, arm, or whole body during the travel time to match any move that you make insofar as evasion.
- Someone with a gun can shoot without ever revealing their presence, and can do so from several yards away. Unless someone with a knife throws it from a hiding place (which would require line of sight at the time of impact), they will have to get within just a few feet to do damage. The closing distance for a knife can be as short as 21 feet or well beyond 30 feet depending on the characteristics of the attacker. While this seems like a lot of area to cover, bear in mind that this is also your window to disarm the attacker. In most cases, if you have a reasonable level of situation awareness, you will know that there is an attack about to occur.
- Despite all the hype surrounding rapid fire guns, in a 1 to 1 situation, the attacker will still have to line up the shot in order to be successful. This can still cost several seconds to minutes depending on how you move and the consequences of the adrenaline surge in your attacker. On the other side of the equation, a knife is a much more natural feeling tool to hold, and multiple lunges with accuracy are much easier to achieve. While adrenaline still plays a role, there is still much more room for correction during the progression of the knife's motion towards the target.

### 5 Things to do When Confronted With a Knife

No matter whether you realized you were in a dangerous situation or not, the addition of a knife can rapidly escalate the situation to a point where you can no longer avoid the fact that you are in grave

danger. Once you know that you must stave off a knife attacker, there are some important things you must do before making any moves.

In some cases, you may have less than a few seconds, while in others you may be able to buy a few minutes before the attacker backs off or decides to escalate. What you do in this narrow time frame will not only affect the outcome of the situation, but it can follow you for the rest of your life.

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Here are some things to do before your attacker lunges and tries to strike:

- Remain calm and in control of yourself – as with any other dangerous situation, the worst thing you can do is panic or lose control of your thoughts and emotions. Take the time now to learn how to control your adrenaline responses with deep breathing, intensive focus, and key words that will enable you to think clearly in a time of need. As with practicing actual self defense moves, preparing yourself mentally for an attack scenario is also very important.
- Aim to de-escalate the situation instead of make it worse – there is no question that facing a criminal is a situation that can send you into a pure rage. If you are the kind of person that may want to stomp, maim, or even kill a criminal, it is very important to take a step back. When you are in that condition, it is very hard to control yourself, and even harder to come out of the situation as the winner. It will always be to your best interest to lull the attacker into dropping their guard, or completely ending the attack with no one harmed. In most cases, you can use your composure and calmness to create a similar effect in the other person. Once again, this will take a good bit of skill and practice. During the process of diffusing the situation, remember that a window of opportunity that was under 30 seconds may be something that stretches over several minutes before a suitable resolution. Do not give up on the process if it drags out, but do keep your awareness open for a possible surprise attack and the need to end negotiation and actively defending yourself physically.
- Draw Attention to the Altercation – there are several ways to achieve this goal. Talking loudly is one way that may be more effective than screaming simply because the attacker won't realize you are trying to draw attention. Sadly, even if you do scream, people that are passing by might ignore your pleas for help. Screaming should only be used as a last ditch effort when you cannot escape and you have nothing else to use as a distraction.
- Assess your attacker and how best to neutralize them – depending on the situation, an attacker may not be interested in hurting you, let alone employing lethal force. The attacker may want to steal money, or may be under the influence of drugs or some kind of psychotic episode. Knowing what your attacker is after can be used as leverage to avoid getting hurt. Never forget, however, that even an initial lack of intent to cause harm can quickly change once the attacker has what they want and fears reprisal at some point in the future.
- Be honest about how your skills and tools stack up to the situation – the worst time to be a legend in your own mind is when someone is menacing you with a knife. If you do not practice self defense moves, don't try to mimic something you saw in the movies or read about online. If you have health problems, are obese, or haven't kept up with previous training, don't stake your life on the hopes you might succeed. Being honest about what you have on hand vs the situation is the best way to find a viable path to staying alive and unharmed.

## How to Talk an Attacker Down from Attacking

No matter whether your visceral response to a knife attack is to respond with fear, rage, or something

in between, your physical skill sets may not be optimal for staving off an attack. Regardless of these factors, there is always a chance to talk a knife attacker down provided you follow some simple rules:

- You must always face the attacker. If they come up from behind, try to find a way to turn around so you can see them. Make eye contact. People are like dogs in the sense that they find it very hard to attack or kill when you look straight into their eyes. Do not use an aggressive eye posture, but do make a point to draw their attention to the fact that you are a human being. If you are very lucky, this may stun your attacker for a second or two. You can either continue trying to talk them down, or proceed to attempting to disarm them.
- When you do speak, use a calm, steady voice. Do not use words that evoke threat or hostility. Beyond that, it doesn't necessarily matter what you say. Introduce yourself, ask for the attacker's name, ask how they are feeling. What you say should be calm and unexpected because this can easily jar the person out of whatever mindset they got themselves into before attacking you. Once you get them out of that mind space, you stand a better chance of completely diffusing the situation.
- If you cannot jar them with calmness, switch tactic and ask them what they want. A mugger may ask for jewelry, money, or something else of value. Other attackers may also define something else that you can use as leverage and as part of your escape plans.
- During the process of talking down an attacker, you must maintain eye contact and use body language that suggests your attacker should back off. This isn't so much about puffing yourself up to look bigger or taking on a fighting stance. It is more about how you use your physical space and emotional cues to unconsciously affect the attacker. Remember, if the person is on drugs, crazy, or otherwise delusional, it is not likely these methods will work. At best, you may buy a few seconds, but you must use them wisely to prepare for an attack.

## Things to Avoid During a Knife Attack

As soon as a knife is drawn, you will need to work with a situation that can shift from one level of danger to another in a matter of seconds. Here are some things you must avoid at all cost:

- Drawing a weapon during the wrong window of opportunity – Regardless of the weapon you have onhand, if you draw too soon, you will lose the element of surprise. If you draw too late, the knife attacker can simply avoid the weapon and continue the attack. The window of opportunity varies with each weapon. For guns, pepper spray, or tasers, you will need to have the weapon drawn and ready to fire as the attacker approaches within 30 to 21 feet. You should always have at least one gun in a hip level holster or jacket pocket that you can point and aim without brandishing. If the attacker is within actual striking distance, you will be better served with getting enough distance between you in order to draw your own weapon. Alternatively, you may simply have to fight using hand to hand fighting skills until you can get clear and use whatever weapon you are carrying.
- Trying to counter with a knife – knife attacks are fast and deadly. Even a relatively inexperienced criminal will be more psyched up and ready to do damage. If you do know a knife attack is coming, you can get the knife ready in case you see an opening, but do not brandish and lose the element of surprise.
- Never simply hand over what the attacker wants – consider a situation where the attacker says they want money or other valuables. Always keep a few pennies or other change in with any paper based cash and hold them both up. Once the attacker says to hand them over, turn and duck so that your body presents a smaller target, and throw the items as far as possible. If the attacker wanted money, the sound of the change may be jarring enough to startle. Use the time you have to roll out of the way, take cover, get up and run, or lunge at the attacker.

- Looking Away from the Knife – Unless you've been in this kind of scenario, you have no idea how fast they can go down. The worst thing you can do is lose sight of the knife. Knowing where it is at all times and how to counter it are both life saving skills that are as important to learn as many others.

## How to Disable an Attacker With a Knife

Based on my personal experience in fencing (French foil and saber), and also having dealt with knife attacks, I don't necessarily agree with all the advice found online. Once the situation goes to a point where an attack is imminent, your opening moves can make the difference between living and dying.

- contrary to popular belief, the attacker isn't going to let you land a kick to the groin, poke their eyes out, or reach them in any way without using the knife as a defensive weapon. Therefore, your first goal must always be to make sure the attacker's knife cannot easily strike you before you go in for your own attack. You can use feints which cause the attacker to move the knife in another direction. Or, you can strike pressure points on the attacker's forearm to disarm the attacker using the arm that would be closest to the attacker's body during the attack. Unlike a fist fight or non-weapon assisted attack, you will need to pivot your body and shoulder closest to the knife away so that the knife does not touch you while you strike for the attacker's arm. Your best option for disarming will be in finding a stick or some other object that can be used to strike the attacker's knife arm. Ideally, if your situation awareness was at a good level prior to the attack, you would have already spotted any object that could be of use to you. If you do spot something, move towards it while you are moving away from the attacker.
- You must have a strategy. Depending on the skill of your attacker, it may not be possible to disarm them or disable them with one blow. If you can at least disable the attacker's knife hand/arm, you must follow up quickly by neutralizing the threat. This is the time to aim for the attacker's eyes, throat, groin, or other sensitive areas.
- When someone can close a gap of 21 – 30 feet in less than a few seconds, there is no time to pull out a can of pepper spray, a taser, a gun, or some other weapon. If they stop within this distance, you must be prepared to fight hand to hand and use a strategy to keep the knife away from your body and take it away from the attacker. Never try to grab the knife or simply hold the attacker's wrist unless you have the strength to keep the knife from touching your body. If you grab and hold the attacker's knife hand, they will instinctively pull back or use other methods to shake your grip. You are far better off striking a pressure point on the attacker's arm so that they are in sufficient pain to prevent them from wielding the knife effectively. In a situation where you cannot reach the attacker's sensitive areas, be sure to strike the attacker's other arm to prevent transfer of the knife to the other hand.
- The only thing you might be carrying that can be used as a first blow device is a pocketbook, backpack, or other heavy object that can be thrown at the attacker. Always aim for the face or center of mass. Do not waste time aiming your own throwable object at the knife hand or arm because it will be too easy to miss. Your goal should be to surprise the attacker and make an opening for the next part of your strategy, which will be to neutralize the attacker's knife hand, and then go for completely neutralizing the individual.
- Some people mistakenly believe they can play something like Karate Kid and simply duck and roll at a knife attacker's legs and somehow hit a sensitive area. As soon as you duck and commit to the roll, rest assured your attacker will be in a perfect position to strike your back, neck, or other areas with the knife. Of all the moves you might be considering, this is truly one of the worst. If you are going to use any kind of duck and roll technique, use it to get away from the attacker.
- In a situation where the attacker is disarmed but still coming at you, it is possible to leverage

your direction to grab their arm and throw them further off balance by accelerating their direction of motion. Bear in mind, however, throwing techniques, like rolls, require a good bit of practice and dedication to form. There is a right time to use these methods, and a wrong one.

- Depending on your self defense skills, it may or may not be possible for you to knock the attacker out or do more than stun them for a minute or two. During that time, you must get control of the knife and escape if possible. It is not a good idea to let anger or rage take hold at this point in time. An attacker can easily fake being more injured than they actually are and then turn the tables on you if you go in for an extra kick or punch. If your attacker is on the ground and seems neutralized, just get off the scene as quickly as possible and call the police. Go to a public place and wait there until you are certain that your attacker has been captured or you receive word that it is not likely the attacker will be trying to reconnect with you.
- Once your attacker is on the ground or does not have a weapon, most laws say you cannot continue to beat the attacker, let alone turn a weapon on them. That being said, more than a few people who feared for their lives have drawn guns or other weapons and deployed them in these situations. Although I don't recommend doing this for the practical reasons listed above, I can only say if you wind up in this situation, it will be your call and your decision. Naturally, as with making reasonable and common sense expansions of gun rights for women, I do encourage advocacy and voting to change laws that prevent both men and women from attacking criminals and following through to lethal neutralization once they strike. In my opinion, once you become the target of a criminal act, it should not matter whether the attacker is "sufficiently neutralized" at any point in the situation.

Right now, we live in a sick society where criminal bullies have more rights than the people they target for rape, robbery, murder, and other forms of harm. Sadly, far too many of these criminals use knives because they are effective weapons that require little in the way of training or upkeep.

Learning how to defend yourself during a knife attack should be a top priority.

It is also time to demand changing laws that give an unfair advantage to criminals who will attack because they know you are at a legal disadvantage insofar as the steps you can take during the altercation.



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