

How to Defend Against A Machete Attack

Historically speaking, machetes were used to clear vegetation.

While they were also issued to the military, they were still mainly used for this purpose as opposed to being a weapon for defense and offense. Their main use as an agricultural tool does not take away their deadly nature or the need to know how to use them as a weapon in a time of need. These very sharp, lightweight tools can slice and dice a human as if they were nothing more than a sugar cane in a cane field, or they can be used to defend you and your family against many other kinds of weapons.

Overview of Machetes as Weapons

The machete is a simple tool with a broad, thin flat blade that measures about 18 inches long and 1/10 to 1/8" thick. It can be used like an ax for chopping or used similar to a short sword in combat. With practice, the machete can be readily used by adults, teens, and children as a weapon. Using machetes as weapons dates back several centuries.

Machetes tend to be very popular during uprisings or other occasions of social unrest.

For example, during the colonial period, machetes proved to be formidable weapons against swords and the crude firearms of the times. Even today, in Ex-European colonies, machetes are the weapon of choice for revolutionaries and instigators of social disturbance. As a case in point, during the 1994 Rwandan genocide, most of the victims were beheaded or hacked to death with machetes.

Insofar as injuries caused by machetes, they can be both

brutal and catastrophic.

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Here are just a few possible outcomes of being hit with a machete:

- You could have your head cut off with one swing.
- A blow to the head can cause the machete blade to be lodged in the skull. This can kill immediately, stun the victim, or cause enough bleeding to lead to death.
- Arms, legs, fingers, and hands can be severed completely.
- A deep cut from a machete anywhere on the body can bleed out very quickly and cause death.
- Receive a deep cut that would allow you to bleed out quickly.
- A crazed or frenzied attacker may simply hack you to bits.

How Machetes Differ from Swords

Since a machete has a relatively long blade when compared to most knives, it makes some sense to compare them to swords.

This will help you understand more about their strengths and weaknesses, and also give you some ideas about techniques that you can use to wield them effectively. Here are some similarities and differences that you should always be aware of, especially if you have any kind of training in fencing or sword fighting.

By comparison, there is no question that the brutish shape of a machete makes it look far less elegant than conventional swords. Machetes also take a lot less effort and skill to wield. As long as you have the brute force required to wield the machete and train it on your target, it doesn't matter

much whether they are aiming at you with some other weapon or trying to block your blows. Unlike lighter swords, if the target's arm is blocking your path, the machete can easily take that arm off and still be moving towards a more vital area.

Swords and knives developed for fighting and killing are usually designed to kill as quickly and cleanly as possible. Machetes, on the other hand, are much closer to axes in terms of their weight distribution and motion.

As with axes, the effect of a heavy tool/weapon on the body is always gruesome and devastating. To this day, when ultra-violent criminals want to turn an "execution" into a statement, they will use machetes because of the visual effect of the wounds left on the bodies.

They are also a weapon of choice in ethnic cleansing and other situations where those who are the most violent seek to terrorize anyone in their path. In almost every case they succeed because the people they are decimating do not have the skill required to fight off a machete attack, nor do they have superior guns to kill off their attackers and prevent further attempted incursions by others.

The Machete vs Sword Strengths as Weapons

Machetes are known for their powerful ability to cut and cleave.

If you swing at a person that isn't wearing suitable armor, the machete will cut deeply into a limb or other fleshly part until the blade hits the bone. These cuts are also very messy and bloody. Even if the machete wound turns out to be a slight graze from the curved tip, it will do a lot of damage in terms of blood loss. Machetes can easily inflict deep slicing wounds

as well as one that that produce shredded flesh that is hard to repair.

Because the machete blade is shorter than that of a saber, it can work better in tight quarters. Since the blade is relatively thick and flat, it also works well if you need to defend yourself from blows coming from another weapon. While a machete blade won't stop a bullet, it will easily block knives, swords, staffs, and several different kinds of thrown weapons. As long you know how to position the machete, the blade will do the rest of the job in terms of blocking or deflecting another weapon's intended path towards you.

Even though there are many different kinds of swords, the cavalry saber with its curved blade is one of the closest in shape to the machete. Do not confuse the historic cavalry sabers with the sabers commonly used in fencing. The latter is a much thinner, lighter blade that is used in sportsmanship events. While it can also be a formidable weapon, the cavalry saber is far more dangerous. You can learn some good techniques from fencing, however martial arts classes and other weapons training may be of more use in terms of learning defensive and offensive weapon fighting. For the rest of this article, my references is to cavalry style sabers as opposed to fencing sabers.

Advantages of Sabers over Machetes

- Most have a 36" blade that makes them useful for attacking and hitting a target at a greater distance than reachable with a machete.
- Sabers have a point that is designed to penetrate the human body. A skilled swordsman can easily thrust the saber between ribs to pierce vital organs protected by them. By contrast, to achieve this with a machete, you must be able to maneuver the blade so that the sharp edge lands between the bones. It is possible, however it

takes a lot more time to position and achieve than with a saber. Without the thin, sharp point of a saber, it also takes a lot more force to drive the machete blade so that it will cut deeply into the target.

- Sabers can also pierce body armor with their sharp points. It is very difficult, if not impossible to pierce armor with a machete. In order to succeed, you would need to put a lot of power behind the blow and must still use the sharp edge of the blade; not the point. Because the machete blade is so short, you will not be able to use its length to generate enough power on the part of the blade that hits the armor.
- Sabers have hand guards to protect the user's hand and fingers. The hand guard can also be used to catch the enemy blade or can be used to punch with. The lack of hand guards on a machete makes a prized target of your hands. All an attacker has to do is strike the hand, wrist, or arm holding the machete, and it is very likely you will drop the weapon. If you are up against someone with a machete, you can also focus on this weakness in the weapon and use it to your advantage. This is distinctly different from knife fighting, where you would focus more on pressure points along the forearm and upper arm as opposed to trying to strike the hand itself. Because the machete blade is longer, you may not have an easy time of getting to pressure points useful in knife fighting, so you may, indeed, have to focus more on the hands and wrists if they come into range. Never try to grab the machete blade! It is even more deadly and will inflict more damage than trying to grab a knife blade.
- The way sabers are sharpened gives you more options. Since the lower 2/3 of the back edge of a saber blade is left unsharpened, you can place your off hand against the back of the blade to push down on it without getting cut. This increases the amount of force the blade will have when it encounters the target. If you want to use a

backhand technique to cut, then you can simply use the upper portion of the blade.

Matters of Concealment

One of the biggest advantages that machetes have over sabers is they are easier to conceal. Depending on where you live, or the area you are traveling through, machetes may be common items that most people have in a tool shed or even in plain view. On the other hand, swords are not normally worn or carried as they were in days gone by. Typically, if people see you in your yard chopping down vegetation with a machete, they won't think much about it. If they see you running around your yard with a sword, they may stop and wonder what you are doing.

Remember, before a major disaster occurs, the more you blend in and look like everyone else, the less likely it is that you will gain unwanted attention during a time of need.



Street Fighting With a Machete or Saber

When it comes to street fighting, machetes have definite advantages over knives because they are just long enough to keep your opponent at a distance. If you are in relatively close quarters, the machete will serve you better than the saber because of the smaller amount of room required to wield it. Unfortunately, the usefulness of a machete in a street fight only applies if you have enough room to wield the machete. You will need about 10 feet of space (closing to about 5 feet) to use the machete effectively, but not more than 30 feet.

Since most street fights happen at much closer range, you will

have to start using the machete before your opponent gets too close. This, in turn, can lead to other problems including the possibility for other people to get involved or for your opponent to draw a gun. Once you reveal that you have any kind of weapon, you will begin losing any advantage you have.

Your ability to street fight using a machete as a weapon will depend on two things.

First, the degree of training you have versus your adversary is very important. As with any other skill, the more time you spend practicing with a machete as a weapon, and the more techniques you learn, the better your form and precision will be in a situation where you must defend yourself.

The second thing that determine your success or failure is how willing you are to use the machete during a street fight.

Simply put, these are brutal tools that make equally brutal weapons. They are not for the faint hearted or dainty minded. If you are looking for a weapon that will maim, injure, or kill neatly and with little pain, the machete is not going to be a suitable option for you.

Just because you have a weapon, that does not mean you will win a street fight.

Here are some things to consider when assessing your odds of winning a street fight and possible techniques:

- If you are outnumbered, chances are you will not win. Even if you have a machete and everyone else has knives, you will still have to deal with attacks from multiple fronts or figure out how to stage the situation so that only one person can reach you at a time.
- In a situation where you are in a smaller group of people compared to your adversaries, it may still be possible to escape. Your focus should be on short, fast, hit and run tactics that inflict a great deal of damage

and distraction while you make your escape.

- Individuals carrying firearms will always have an advantage to people carrying machetes, knives, and swords. If you do not have a gun, there are still some techniques you can try to use and make the most of a machete. This includes learning how to lead your adversary to fire in the wrong direction and methods for ensuring they make as many mistakes as possible. Martial arts and some sword fighting classes can help you with figuring out which techniques will work for these kinds of situations. Count on spending months to years perfecting your skills before you can take on someone that is well trained in handling a gun and firing to maim or kill. The old adage “never bring a knife to a gun fight” applies equally to never bring a machete or a sword. It can be done, but you would be far better off making sure that gun rights, gun ownership, and gun training are expanded and available to all so that you never have to worry about being up against an armed criminal or terrorist that ignores laws to begin with.

Choosing a Machete for Self Defense

The worst thing you can do is buy a cheap machete from a surplus store. In most cases, these tools won't even cut through a thumb sized branch let alone inflict serious injury. Other cheap machetes are also equally useless for self defense. The only thing these machetes are good for is looking scary. When faced with an actual adversary, you'd probably have better success jumping up and down, screaming, and acting crazy rather than trying to actually attack with the machete. While brandishing these machetes may act as a deterrence, don't count on it lasting for long.

In the hands of an experienced user, a good quality machete can be an effective weapon for either self-defense or as an offensive weapon. Stay away from machetes with thin, bendable

blades or poor handles. Choose a machete that has a thick, steel blade that can be easily sharpened, and will hold a good sharp edge. The handle must also fit well in your hand and be comfortable so that you can swing it easily. When you find the right machete, you should be able to wield it comfortably and get the same effects as a chopper or meat cleaver.

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Options for Training

Training in hand to hand weapons can take years and go through many stages. In this case, your instructor may start you off with wooden sticks and teach you wooden staff fighting skills at the same time.

These lessons are important for developing both good footwork and transferring power along the core muscle groups of your body to deliver the most effective blows. As you progress through different weapon shapes and materials, you will also develop increased confidence and capacity to wield a machete safely and effectively for offensive or defensive purposes.

Techniques for Making the Most of Machetes

One of the first things you will have to do is understand how the length of the machete can be used to your advantage or disadvantage in any given situation. If the other person has a saber or other type of long bladed weapon, you will have to compensate for the shorter blade. Typically, this will involve using a range of strategies that will enable you to reach your target's vital organs without them hitting you first.

Here are your options:

- Learn basic fencing strategies aimed at getting your opponent to make a mistake. For example, you can try lowering the blade or angling it downward so that it looks like there is a clear path to a vital organ. Once your opponent takes the bait and charges forward, you can step aside and bring the machete around to slash into your opponents side. From there, you would have to follow up on the advantage of surprise and continue to neutralize the threat from the other person.
- Unless you are in really good shape and have excellent flexibility, ducking or rolling with a machete isn't a good idea. You will be better served by climbing and jumping down to an unguarded area of your opponents body, or using other moves to disorient the attacker.
- Most styles of machete fighting use 8 basic attacks and fundamental defenses. Haitian Machete Fencing is an excellent blend of multiple disciplines including staff fighting, sword based fencing, and machete work. As with sword fencing, machete fighting starts off with both parties in an "on guard" position. Similar to fencing, machete fighters will also put one arm behind their back, however it may be used during the fight for various purposes.
- Machete fighting is distinctly different from French Foil fencing in the sense that you will do a lot of crouching, pivoting, and dodging. Since it is not useful to try and thrust the blade of the machete into your opponent, you won't be concerned much with lunging. Advances, however, must be carefully designed so that you can bring the blade to bear on a suitable target with optimal force. When compared to fencing, that usually means a lot more pivoting and attention to core muscle groups as your body twists to ensure the machete hits the target.
- A strong defense is every bit as important as knowing

how to attack with a machete. The defensive foot work is called *falsos* and low ducking moves are called *desgoneses*. These moves are designed to help the fighter find an opening in the other fighters defenses in order to strike with safety. Since the strongest part of the machete blade is in the middle, it is most often used to block and parry. If you have ever watched or taken part in sword fighting, then you already know that dozens of attacks, parries, blocks, and ripostes can happen in just a few minutes. Machete fighting is no different in terms of the speed of events.

Even though machetes are classified as agricultural tools, they can also be very deadly weapons. If you want to survive an attack from someone wielding a machete, it is very important to understand how this weapon works. From there, you will find it easier to develop the appropriate footwork and defensive moves. In most cases, your best option will be to get away from your attacker as quickly as possible.

Wooden sticks are no match for the direct blow from a machete. If you do have a pole or similar weapon available, your best option will be to aim for the hand, wrist, or arm wielding the machete. These moves will buy you some time, however much more training is needed to improve your odds of success.

Remember machetes are crude cutting machines and are well known as horrible and deadly killing devices. Learning how to use them for self defense is a good idea for these troubling times, as this is the best way to learn how to survive a machete attack as well as launch one if needed.



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