

Drop and Set Punch Fakes

by Keith Pascal

The problem that most beginners make when trying any type of fake is that they move that is cut short often looks obvious. The enemy knows that "something is up."

You have practiced a full-length punch, but this time, that first punch will be used as a diversion. So, instead of a full-motion hit, you begin your secondary strike 3/4 of the way through the first move.

Since it's not a full motion, beginning fighters often, though accidentally, change some aspect of the punch move, which kills any chance of a subtle finesse.

How would you like to eliminate some, if not all, of the telegraphing motion?

The Punching Game

I decided that the best way to get rid of the unnatural motions of the shortened punch would be to get rid of that first punch, completely. I needed a natural move that might precede contact in a fight. I needed something other than a punch or eye jab.

My answer was to "drop something."

For the purposes of the practice session, I needed something that wouldn't break, roll, or bounce away, when I dropped it. A beanbag became my dropping item of choice ... while practicing.

I wanted to drop and hit. Unfortunately, my one hit looked horrible ... there was a lot of advanced warning. How could I make the punch faster and more startling?

My answer was to speed up the punch. That seemed to help.

Out of curiosity, I punched twice, to see if the motion would be further reduced. I dropped the beanbag, pretending that I had dropped whatever I would be holding while attacked in public.

Drop -- punch -- punch.

I was able to fire off both punches before the bag hit the floor. And thus the game developed. How many times could I punch, after simply opening my fingers to allow the bag to fall? (No slight tossing of the beanbag allowed. Just open the fingers and let it fall.)

How many times can you punch before the object hits the floor?

To make sure I was accurate counting the number of punches before the beanbag touched the ground, I had someone else count while I punched. When I didn't have to focus on ascertaining quantity, the punches were better, more accurate.

Later, I set up a camera and tripod ... and then watched the video in slow motion, while counting. (No need for a practice partner with a camera.)

A Real Martial-Arts Strategy

Imagine someone attacking you. You hold whatever you have in your hand in front of the person running toward you. As he or she comes into range, you openly drop your item, and punch mid-drop.

Unfortunately, that's not a very realistic situation.

Your drop won't look real. But ...'

What if you could make your first move more subtle?

My solution was to develop a nervous "oops."

Whether or not I am nervous, I "pretend" to be. When the person approaches aggressively, I "pretend" to be clumsy. *Oh, crud ... someone is yelling at me with fist raised. He's coming over.* I'm so nervous that this box of shoes I am holding slips from my hands, and ... BAM. I punch or kick.

Note: Another tactic is to throw the item that you are holding toward your attacker, and hit mid-motion. Of course, this will be perceived as a more aggressive action on your part by any witnesses.

If you are a good actor, then you can pretend to drop and hit right after you let go of the item you're holding.

Note: Your action has to draw the attention of your opponent. You either want a pause in motion, a shift in eye gaze ... some action where your enemy *assesses* the drop. Your action needs to distract, so that you can surprise him or her.

Practice everything from how your hand will let something slip, to your facial expressions, as you both deal with a falling item and an attacker, at the same time.

Develop your subtle *oops*.

A Better Self-Defense Strategy

Let's recap for a minute: Many fakes start with a progressive indirect attack, but some beginners find it difficult to make the first strike non-telegraphing.

So, you take away the first attack and replace it with something else; the progression develops from a move other than a fake strike. In this case, you pretend to drop something.

You accidentally drop, and ... Ca-runch! You hit.

For some beginning martial artists, a better strategy might be to change the initial movement from an *accidental* drop to something with perceived intent.

Actually, this would be almost the same move — you still act, have an object in hand, and end up dropping the item and hitting mid-drop.

So, what's the difference?

You notice the person approaching, and instead of being so flustered that you drop what you're carrying, you deliberately begin to set the object down.

You see the attack coming. Your opponent sees that you see the attack coming. So, he or she reasons that you are caring for your package by putting it down, before the altercation.

This becomes a feint, because in the middle of the action of setting down your precious object, you strike out. You have a few options as to how you'll proceed:

- * Drop the item mid-placement and hit with your open hand.
- * Pretend to place the item, but mid-motion, you strike with the object.
- * Drop-kick the package right into your attacker ... with a strike or kick immediately following. (This is another distraction ... enough to strike. I don't expect you to end the fight by kicking a vase at your assailant.)
- * Start to set the thing down, and then throw the object into your attacker; and continue with the original "recipe" -- hit or kick mid-motion.

Note: Once you perfect a drop fake, you can go back to perfecting your true progressive indirect attacks. This time, your initial punch will seem more real, as your follow-up punch does the real damage.

Last Thoughts

Whether you construct a fake at the beginning of an attack or insert into the middle of a self-defense situation, the basic components remain the same. Your opponent needs to believe that the movement is real. Ideally, the movement should cause a reaction in your enemy. You catch him or her mid-motion. You need to know your Plan B — how will you immediately continue if your enemy DOESN'T react to the fake?

Fakes are great, but you also need to be able to fire off direct hits and kicks — strikes that end the fight fast.

If that's your goal, I'd like to recommend an special ebook for immediate download: **How to End The Fight with One Hit**. It comes complete with plenty of photos, and some great ebonuses. <http://punchharder.com/learn-how-to-fight/>

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