

**UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS**

MARTIAL ARTS CENTER OF EXCELLENCE

THE BASIC SCHOOL

24191 GILBERT ROAD

QUANTICO, VIRGINIA 22134

**STUDENT OUTLINE**

**FREE SPARRING**

**MAIB1020**

**MARTIAL ARTS INSTRUCTOR COURSE**

**M02MMET**

APPROVED BY: Maj. Carter C.T. DATE: 1 January 2020

**LEARNING OBJECTIVES**a. **TERMINAL LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

(1) Given personnel, sparring equipment, and with the aid of references supervise free sparring to ensure that any discrepancies are corrected immediately and the risk of injury is mitigated. (0916-INST-2051)

b. **ENABLING LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

(1) Given personnel and sparring equipment determine free sparring event for appropriate belt level to ensure technique proficiency. (0916-INST-2051c)

**1. PURPOSE OF FREE SPARRING.** The two primary purposes of free sparring within the Marine Corps Martial Arts Program are to bridge from static to dynamic and an inoculation to interpersonal violence.

**a. Bridge from Static to Dynamic.** Free sparring is the bridge between static techniques and a dynamic environment. This is the final stage of training after executing techniques in the air and on striking pads. Free sparring gives Marines the opportunity to apply the individual techniques they have learned in a realistic environment with a live resisting opponent. Executing techniques one at a time in the air is much different than using them together against another person who is defending themselves and also trying to hurt you.

**b. Inoculation to Interpersonal Violence.** Inoculation is the process of introducing something to the body so it can defend itself in the future. This is commonly done with vaccines, such as the flu, that introduce a small amount of the virus to the body resulting in a strengthened immune system. By introducing Marines to violence on a personal level, they will be more prepared for a real close combat scenario.

**2. CONDUCT OF THE BOUT.** Free sparring is a training tool designed to develop Marines' skills and confidence, and must not become a fight club or beat-down.

**a. Combat Mindset.** Proper combat mindset is essential for free sparring to be effective. Instructors must ensure the emphasis is on effective combative and it does not become sport fighting. The focus should be on killing blows, solid offensive and defensive techniques, and gaining the tactical advantage so the enemy cannot return to the engagement. Free sparring also

develops the control and maturity to use the appropriate amount of violence for any given situation along the continuum of force.

**b. Maturity.** All bouts will begin and end with both participants touching gloves or shaking hands. This signifies that each fighter is ready and shows respect to the other Marine. All Marines must control their egos and tempers at all times. Marines who demonstrate immaturity, lack of control, or unsportsmanlike conduct will not be allowed to participate.

**c. Time Limit.** Body sparring, ground fighting, and striking will be conducted in rounds with a time limit. For entry level Marines, body sparring will be two to three minute rounds. All other events will be three to six minutes, depending on the fitness level and skill of the Marines. There is no time limit when sparring with weapons because the bout will stop on the first killing blow.

**d. Weapons.** Approximately half of all sparring should include weapons to develop skills in all areas of close combat. These fights will run until the referee observes a killing blow, similar to pugil sticks.

(1) Killing Blow. A killing blow is a strike with a weapon that would cause serious bodily harm or death. The referee must consider the technique, force, and target area when determining what is, or is not, a killing blow.

(2) Whistle. The referee will control all weapons free sparring events with a whistle. A loud, clear whistle blast is much easier for the fighters to hear when wearing a helmet and fighting. The four whistle blasts will start the fight, stop the fight, identify the winner, and show the killing blow used.

**e. MAI Participation.** Instructors should participate in free sparring events with their students as much as possible. There must still be a referee and RSO supervising the bouts for control and safety. When sparring with students the instructor will fight at, slightly above, and slightly below the student's skill level. This is to allow the instructor to fault check the students and help them to develop their skills. Free sparring is NOT for instructors to beat up students or demonstrate their skills.

**3. LEVELS OF FREE SPARRING.** The belt levels in MCMAP are designed to progressively develop beginner, intermediate, and finally advanced techniques. The free sparring events are included in the belt level curriculum in order to enhance the

development of those skills learned at that level. Each free sparring event must be completed after learning the associated techniques in that belt, but before taking the belt test. Marines should continue to participate in free sparring events for the belts they have already earned, in order to maintain and increase proficiency.

**a. Tan Belt.** Pugil sticks and body sparring are the free sparring events at this level.

(1) Pugil Sticks. This allows Marines to train and practice the bayonet techniques they have learned during tan belt.

(a) Target Areas. The authorized target areas are the front of the face and torso. Marines will not strike the back of the head or torso, the neck, or the groin.

(b) Techniques. The authorized techniques are those taught in tan belt bayonet: straight thrust, butt strokes, smash, slash, and disrupt. Marines must practice proper fundamentals such as the modified basic warrior stance and angles of movement. The pugil stick will always be used as a bayonet, never as a baseball bat or club.

(2) Body Sparring. Body Sparring is the final stage of training the punches learned during tan belt.

(a) Target Areas. The authorized target areas for body sparring are the front of the torso. Marines will not strike the head, neck, back, or groin.

(b) Techniques. The authorized techniques are the punches taught in tan belt: lead hand punch, rear hand punch, hook, and uppercut. Marines will not execute kicks, knees, or elbows during body sparring. Marines must practice proper fundamentals such as the basic warrior stance and angles of movement. Fighters should not drop their hands, hugging their midsection, because it leaves the head unprotected and instills bad habits.

**b. Gray Belt.** Ground fighting is the free sparring event for gray belt, which coincides with the ground fighting techniques introduced during gray belt training. While the ground is certainly not the most advantageous position for a combative engagement, we must be aware of and prepared for the fact that many close combat engagements end up on the ground. Ground fighting is also a basic skill that is relatively easy to

control and practice, and it does not require a large amount of safety gear. Beginning at this level, weapons are introduced and utilized during portions of the training. This fosters proper combat mindset and the ability to adapt to the situation.

(1) Target Areas. The authorized target areas for ground fighting are the carotid artery and large joints, for submissions instead of strikes. There are no eye gouges, fish hooks, heel hooks, or small joint manipulations. All ground fighting will begin with the fighters on the ground, and they will remain on the ground while fighting (no standing).

(2) Techniques. There are no strikes authorized during ground fighting. The only authorized techniques are the ground fighting techniques within each belt. Marines must practice proper principles and fundamentals of ground fighting such as space and control. Fighters should focus on gaining the tactical advantage so they can return to their feet and acquire a weapon.

**c. Green Belt**. Standing striking is the free sparring event for green belt. Many different strikes and counters to strikes have been introduced up to this point and within the green belt syllabus. This free sparring event gives Marines the opportunity to concentrate and really begin to develop the critical components of movement, distance, and timing in an engagement. Weapons should also be incorporated at this level. Maturity and control play an increasing role in ensuring participant's safety throughout each level of training.

(1) Target Areas. The authorized target areas for this event are the front of the torso and the inside and outside of the thighs. Marines will not strike the head, neck, back, groin, or knees.

(2) Techniques. The authorized techniques are the upper and lower body strikes within each belt level. Marines will not use elbow strikes, knees, or stomps at this level. Marines must practice proper fundamentals such as the basic warrior stance and angles of movement. Fighters should not drop their hands, hugging their midsection, because it leaves the head unprotected and instills bad habits.

**d. Brown Belt**. Standing to ground is the free sparring event for brown belt. This combines striking techniques with throws and ground fighting techniques. Weapons should also be

incorporated with standing to ground to train Marines to move through the different levels of combat. This event begins to cement the previous levels with the bridge mentioned in the introduction.

(1) Target Areas. The authorized target areas for strikes are the torso and the inside and outside of the legs. Marines will not strike to the head, neck, back, groin, or knees. The authorized target areas for submissions are the carotid artery and large joints, for chokes and joint manipulations.

(2) Techniques. The authorized techniques are the upper and lower body strikes, throws, and ground fighting techniques within each belt level. Very light knees and elbows may be used under the strict supervision of a responsible Martial Arts Instructor Trainer. At this level, strikes are included when on the ground. Marines should focus on combining all the principles and fundamentals of close combat.

**e. Black Belt**. Integrated skills free sparring is the final free sparring event to be conducted at the black belt level. This training should be as realistic and dynamic as possible to complete the bridge from all the static techniques in MCMAP. There are not specific procedures for this event, but it should refine all skills by including leadership, different weapons, rough terrain, multiple opponents, low light, and other disadvantageous situations. This training must always be supervised by a Martial Arts Instructor Trainer to ensure proper conduct and safety is enforced. The MAI is not authorized to conduct this training without an MAIT present.

**4. SAFETIES**. Free sparring events should be as realistic as possible while ensuring the safety of the Marines. It is the responsibility of the instructor to ensure all required safety measures are present and adhered to at all time. Failure to follow the necessary safeties increases the probability of injuries, which degrades unit capabilities and gives MCMAP a black eye.

**a. Personnel**. All sparring events must have the required safety personnel for that event. These individuals have specific responsibilities as described below.

(1) Fighters. All Marines participating in free sparring events are personally responsible for their safety and the safety of the other fighter. Marines must be in a full duty status to participate in free sparring. If there is any

question as to whether or not a Marine is physically qualified to participate, they will see a corpsman or medical officer. Before pugil sticks is conducted, the instructor must read the pugil stick training screening that can be found in the tan belt book.

(2) Referee. The referee must be an MAI or MAIT and is responsible for the overall conduct of the bout. They will not have any other role, such as coaching or keeping time, which will distract them in any way. The referee will brief the fighters, check safety gear, start the fight, stop the fight, and monitor the Marines fighting. They must be actively engaged so they can physically break up the fight in case of any unsafe condition.

(3) RSO. The RSO should be an MAI or MAIT but can be a Staff NCO or Officer if none are available. This person is strictly responsible for safety. They will not fight, referee, or coach because it will distract them from observing safety. If they observe any unsafe condition they will inform the referee or stop the bout themselves.

(4) Corpsman. A corpsman is required to be present for all free sparring events.

(5) Time Keeper. A time keeper is only necessary for free sparring events that have timed rounds. Body sparring, ground fighting, and striking will all need a time keeper. This may be any Marine with a watch, or an automatic round timer. Sparring with weapons is never timed because the referee will stop the bout on the first killing blow.

(6) Coach. Having a coach is optional for all free sparring events. If used, this is a MAI or MAIT who is not filling the role of the referee or the RSO.

**b. Safety Gear**. The safety gear required for each free sparring event is outlined below. All gear must be inspected by the instructor for serviceability prior to use. Only training weapons may be used.

(1) Pugil Sticks/Weapons. The safety gear required for pugil sticks, or other weapons, is a helmet with face cage, mouthpiece, neck roll, flak jacket, groin protection, and hockey gloves. The pugil stick or training weapons must also be checked for serviceability.

(2) Body Sparring. The safety gear required for body sparring is head gear, mouthpiece, 16 ounce (minimum) boxing

gloves, and groin protection. Females must also wear a flak jacket for added protection for the female anatomy.

(3) Ground Fighting. The safety gear required for ground fighting is a mouth piece. Groin protection is optional. When adding weapons, all the gear required for pugil sticks must be used.

(4) Standing Striking. The safety gear required for striking standing only is head gear, mouth piece, 16 ounce (minimum) boxing gloves, groin protection, and shin protection. Females must also wear a flak jacket for added protection for the female anatomy. When adding weapons, all the gear required for pugil sticks must be used.

(5) Standing to Ground. The safety gear required for standing to ground is head gear, mouthpiece, 4 ounce (minimum) MMA gloves, groin protection, and shin protection. Females must also wear a flak jacket for added protection for the female anatomy. When adding weapons, all the gear required for pugil sticks must be used.

(6) Integrated Skills Free Sparring. This free sparring event must always be supervised by an MAIT, who will determine the appropriate safety gear for the specific training being conducted.

**c. Training Area.** A soft footed area with a non-slippery surface must be selected for conducting free sparring. This can be a sandy or grassy area that is clear of rocks, stumps, and debris. If available, rubber MCMAP pits provide an excellent soft footed area. Mats are a suitable training area, but are not recommended for pugil sticks or sparring with weapons because students' feet can stick to the mat, prohibiting movement and leading to injury. A ring or octagon may be used as long as there is enough room to execute techniques and the walls are protected with mats or sandbags.

**d. Second Impact Syndrome.** A powerful strike to the head can cause a concussion, which is the bruising of brain tissue caused by the brain impacting the inside of the skull. A second concussion can result in irreversible damage or death if the person has not fully recovered from the first concussion. There must be seven days between pugil stick training to mitigate second impact syndrome.

**e. Hands Out Procedures.** If a fighter cannot safely continue in a free sparring event they will put both hands

straight out in front of them. A Marine will go hands out if they feel they are not able to defend themselves. This may be due to getting the wind knocked out of them, becoming injured, or problems with safety gear. If this happens the referee must immediately stop the bout to assess the situation. The referee will put the Marine's hands on their shoulders and evaluate their condition to determine if and when they can continue.

**f. Tap Out Procedures.** Tap out procedures will be adhered to when conducting free sparring. When any submission technique, such as a choke or arm bar, is executed the Marine must tap out before they become injured. They can tap out by tapping themselves, tapping their opponent, tapping the deck, verbally saying "tap, tap, tap", or any combination of those. It is preferable to tap on your opponent so they can feel it and are immediately aware that you are tapping out. When a Marine taps out, the opponent must immediately release pressure to prevent injury.

**g. Unsafe Conditions.** It is the referee's, and RSO's, responsibility to immediately stop the fight if they see any unsafe condition such as a defenseless fighter, safety gear problems, or if a fighter is injured. A fighter is defenseless if they appear unable or unwilling to intelligently defend themselves by exposing their back, falling to the ground, dropping their weapons, or dropping their hands. If any safety gear is unserviceable, missing, or not fitted properly the fight must be stopped to correct the problem. If a fighter appears to be injured, by screaming or yelling, the fight must be stopped. Once the unsafe condition is corrected, the referee will restart the fight.

**5. BRIEFING.** The referee must conduct a complete and thorough brief before conducting a free sparring event. This brief will cover the purpose of the free sparring event, the conduct of the event, and all related safeties as outlined in this lesson and within each belt book. Upon completion of free sparring, the instructor should conduct a debrief to discuss lessons learned, and reiterate the combat mindset and principles trained.

**REFERENCES:**

Marine Corps Martial Arts, MCRP 3-02B

Marine Corps Martial Arts Program, MCO 1500.59\_