



WEAPONS PRO

KNIFE PRO



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Use a Knife Like a Pro

If you're walking the streets at night, and you don't have a plan in place to defend yourself, there is a very high chance you're going to end up a victim - should a criminal decide they want what you have. Staying safe is not just about being aware of your situation, it's being prepared for anything. A mugger's "day job" is finding people, just like this, who believe a robbery or a violent attack just won't happen to them, and they're unprepared when it does.



This guide is going to change all that.

Learning to protect yourself is not an impossible process, but it does require a commitment to learn the right level of force to use in a situation, as well as practice to develop the reflexes to deploy your weapon of choice should you ever need it. Today, we're going to run through the knife as a self-defensive weapon, as our team of weapons experts believe it's one of the best choices out there to protect yourself.

Knives for self defense

Despite how many people choose to carry a knife because they're not comfortable with the thought of using a gun to protect themselves, the knife remains one of the most misunderstood weapons for self defense. Before we go any further in this guide, we need to be very clear that in the eyes of the law, both a knife and a gun are classified as lethal weapons, because both have been designed as instruments capable of delivering a lethal blow to an attacker.

This means the same rules as a firearm apply on the legality of using a knife for self defense. Before you make the decision to carry a knife for your own protection, you need to understand this point. You can get in serious trouble if you draw a knife in a fight. Mistakes can happen very fast, and it's important to realize a court will view a knife and a gun in the same light. Using your knife to defend yourself in the right circumstances is much more important than the type of knife you've bought.

Is carrying a knife illegal?

To properly answer this one, it really depends on your state, and the type of knife you want to carry. Typical knives, so long as they've got a blade around 2.5 to 3 inches long are generally acceptable to carry, like a hunting knife, or of course the foldable knives like a multi-tool or a Swiss army knife. What you need to be careful of are the knives you see the bad guys brandishing in the movies. Switchblades, dirks, balisongs, and even knives hidden in umbrellas and walking sticks are considered weapons, and there are usually stricter regulations in place on their use. Some states allow you to own these items, but carrying them in public is typically illegal in many areas.

Before you buy a knife to defend yourself with, talk to your local police office and get familiar with the laws in your state or municipality, so you know what is deemed legal to carry, and you can follow the laws to the letter.

Ok but wait, I'm allowed to protect myself with a knife right?

This is where it gets tricky. Because knives in a fight are considered a lethal weapon, they have a very narrow definition of what constitutes appropriate lethal force for self defense. If you draw your knife and use it to protect yourself in a fight, you better make sure there was justifiable cause to do so. In most states this is only when you're in an immediate risk of death or suffering grievous bodily harm. This means that if you're in a situation where you're in that much danger you're legally allowed to use your knife to fight back, you're also justified if your attack accidentally kills them. But hang on, things aren't really this bad, perhaps you just want to wound them. In this case you're probably not going to be in enough danger (in the eyes of the law) to justify having used your knife. Many criminals use a knife as their weapon of choice, and as a result both prosecutors and juries have little sympathy for those who use these weapons in a fight.



Source: <http://www.donrearc.com/images/disciple1.jpg>

Even if your opponent started the fight, if you escalate the conflict by brandishing your knife while they remain empty handed, it's going to be very difficult to prove that your use of lethal force was proportionate to the situation. You'll quickly find yourself in a situation where you're presenting a means of delivering lethal force against an unarmed opponent. It doesn't matter that they started the fight, in the eyes of the court you will be classified as the aggressor and the onus will be on you to prove you acted in self defense.

By introducing a knife into a fight, you can expect you'll be arrested while they determine the facts surrounding an incident. Unfortunately in many jurisdictions the law states you should avoid conflict wherever possible, and the new "Stand Your Ground" legislation only applies if there's a clear and present danger to your life. Pull a knife in an altercation and you better be damn sure you have solid reasoning why you did, and be able to clearly identify how your attacker was a credible threat to your life. If you're in any doubt, of either of these, simply run.

Why should I carry a knife?

Aside from a firearm, a knife is one of the most lethal weapons you can carry. We recommend always having a means to defend yourself, so long as you are justified in the knife's use before you brandish it. Let's say you're facing an attacker who has drawn a knife on you, bringing your own knife into the fight is now justifiable, and can give you an opening to flee because your opponent may just hesitate in their attack. Knife fights are extremely dangerous and a criminal will definitely think twice before attacking an armed opponent who looks like they know how to handle the weapon.

A knife can also act as a fantastic secondary weapon, as you use it to support your firearm. Say you're in a situation where your attacker is trying to take your pistol from you by force, you can use your knife to dissuade the attack, either by holstering your gun and using the knife in hand-to-hand combat, or brandishing the knife in your non dominant hand as a last resort to slash and strike at your opponent.

The moral dilemma

Just like a firearm is capable of delivering lethal force, you need to decide (before you even buy a knife for self defense) if you would be willing to use it to take another's life in place of your own. You need to be very clear on your feelings on this point, because having a knife is not going to do you any good if you hesitate before every strike, or use it halfheartedly against your attacker.



If the situation warrants you to brandish your knife, understand that it is a very dangerous weapon and even a single thrust into a vital organ can result in internal bleeding and death. If you're not yet ready to use this level of force to protect your own life, perhaps a different and less lethal defensive weapon will be more suitable for you.

Best knives for self defense

When it comes to using a knife for self defense, there are many different factors to consider. Crocodile Dundee's famous words may come to mind here, but I personally believe that bigger isn't always better when it comes to picking the right knife for you. Of course a massive fighting knife can be much more intimidating than a little pocketknife, however your knife will not do you any good if it's illegal and is taken off you by the first police officer who see's you carrying it. Whatever blade you do decide to go with, make sure it complies with every law in your area.

The second consideration we recommend is to remember that a knife should be considered a tool. To ensure you never get in any legal trouble when carrying a knife, make sure yours is utilitarian, enabling you to cut, slice and stab, without looking too much like a weapon. The entire point of carrying a knife for self defense is to have it with you at all times, so you're prepared for any situation that may arise.

Types of knives

Once you know which knives are legal, you need to decide which type of knife you will learn to use. Most martial arts schools will teach you how to use fighting knives, but these are not practical (in our opinion) for an everyday carry. Criminals have a wide range of knives at their disposal, and you may

be facing an opponent brandishing a gravity or spring-blade knife, a balisong, or even a ballistic bladed knife. The most common knife you will face is the fighting knife.

Fighting knives

There are knives out there that have been specifically designed with bladed combat in mind. These are normally illegal to carry on your person, because they're heavy duty weapons able to perform both slashing and stabbing actions with ease. They've got ergonomic handles making it very comfortable to use, while maintaining control of your blade in a fight. Compared to the tool knives we recommend carrying for self defense, fighting knives are in a category all of their own. If you want a knife for bladed combat, the fighting knife is your go-to choice, but don't let yourself get caught with one by the police. Here's what you need to consider before you buy:



Source: http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Flickr_-_DVIDSHUB_-_Knife_Fighting.jpg

- Is the knife comfortable to hold in either hand?
- Has the knife been designed to both stab and slash?
- Are there any finger grooves which may limit your grip?
- Is the knife large and sharp enough to penetrate your attacker's vital organs?
- Are you capable of wielding this knife quickly and effectively in a fight?
- Is the knife a lock or fixed blade that's been constructed of high-carbon stainless steel?

Novelty knives

We do not condone the use of the other types of knives a criminal may be brandishing for your own self defense, and classify all of these as novelty knives because they look nice and deadly, but they're unreliable for practical self defense.

- Cheap folding knives can fold closed during combat, potentially injuring your own hand
- The internal mechanisms of a switchblade or balisong are more prone to malfunction
- The entire structural integrity of these knives are inferior to a solid fixed blade
- The hand grips are usually too thin to be grasped effectively in a combat scenario

If you are ever involved in an altercation and use one of these knives for self defense, you're going to have to explain to either the judge or the jury why you had one of these menacing (and probably illegal) items with you, even if you were justified in defending yourself. It's far better for your case if you used a utilitarian knife that is perfectly legal to carry. Again, we do not recommend carrying either a novelty knife or a fighting knife with you for self defense. Pick a tool knife so that the only thing you need to worry about is proving your justifiable cause, not creating reasons why you needed to carry an illegal knife on your person.

Selecting a knife

Our team of weapons experts agrees the single most important factor when selecting a knife, is to find the model which feels "right" in your hands. Each of us will have personal preferences when it comes to the blade and the handle, and even smaller aspects like the weight balance of the knife can make a difference. You want to find a knife that's comfortable to hold, and you're confident to wield. Personally I like thick blades that are a little shorter, with a solid feel and the majority of weight back in the handle to add more force to my strikes.

The handle

Probably the most important part of the entire knife is the handle. This is what you hold onto when you use your knife, and in a life or death situation having the right handle can be the difference between staying in control of your knife, especially if your attacker is trying to take it from you. In cheap knives the handles have been known to break if too much force is applied, so ask the sales assistant the right questions as you don't ever want to get caught out in a situation where you need your knife, but it is no longer functional.

To find out the handle size you need, measure the distance from the second knuckle of your index finger to the second knuckle of your pinkie. This gives you a rough idea of the size you need, but of course, you should always pick up a knife first and check the fit in reality, especially if this is the first knife you've bought. Choose a knife with a handle that fits comfortably into your hand, and that is free from any unnatural shapes, pinch points or sharp edges that stop you from gripping it tight. I also recommend avoiding any blade with a handle that has large finger grooves, as these can force your hand into an uncomfortable position in an actual fight, and reduce your effectiveness with this weapon. Test holding the blade in both a forward grip with the blade protruding from the top of your closed fist, the reverse grip where the blade protrudes back along your wrist and the ice pick grip where the knife juts straight out from the bottom of your closed fist. You're looking for a knife you can effectively wield in all of these directions.

The blade

The most common blades in knives for self defense are stainless steel or carbon. The only real difference between the two is the higher levels of chromium in a stainless steel blade make it more resistant to wear and tear, while a carbon blade is tougher to sharpen they're generally considered stronger (albeit a little more brittle).

The blade length is another key factor, as many states have laws against carrying blades longer than 2.5 to 3 inches. Pick a blade that within your states legal length, but be careful when you're learning to use it. Knife fighting techniques in general use fixed blades as their example weapons, and teach you to use a blade that is 5 to 7 inches long. This is fine for basic technique, but you need to be sure you're well practiced in defending yourself with the knife you're planning to carry. You'll be trusting your life with it if you ever do need to use it.

Fixed versus folding blades

In addition to the blade length, there are two main types of knives you should consider. These are known as fixed blades and folding blades. Fixed blades are my personal preference, because you can deploy and use them faster. If you're facing an attacker who is intent on doing you harm, every second counts and I never want to be caught in a position where I'm fiddling with my knife trying to get it open. All I need to do is reach around to my holster, draw, and I'm ready to defend myself.

Fixed blades are also considered to be more durable, as they are constructed from a single piece of metal. A folding blade on the other hand relies on the central hinge. Of course it is possible (with enough force) to break a fixed blade, however having purposefully tried to break both, it is much easier to snap a folding knife in two - I had to use a hammer and quite a bit of force to break the fixed blade. You'll also find that folding knives are bulkier, with more parts that can go wrong and they're a tad wider when you're wearing it in your holster.



The grip

The grip adds traction to the handle, to keep your knife from slipping from your hand when you really do need it most. There are a number of different grips available, however these all can be roughly grouped into three main types. One of the most durable options is the **textured (checkered) handles** as the grip is forged directly into the metal of the handle. There is no risk of these grips wearing out or slipping off, but if you find yourself sweating during your practice sessions the grip can become slippery. **Rubberized** grips can be a solution as they give far better traction, but their downside is that they will get damaged with time, and will eventually work loose from the knife. **Cord** is the final option, performing well in wet conditions and giving you an added survival benefit of a length of paracord stored conveniently on your knife if you ever need it in an extreme situation.

The weight

You'll find knives come in many different sizes and weights, and is generally relatively proportional to its size, and the length of the blade. Our advice is to stick with a lighter knife that you're able to carry with you at all times of the day, even a sturdy 2 inch blade will be able to inflict lethal damage once you've learn how to handle it correctly.

The size

Don't get caught up on what Hollywood wants you to believe the right knife is, most people will be more than happy with a weapon they're able to carry every day, because it fits in their pocket, purse or holster without drawing any undue attention. Rambo's knife, while impressive, is not something

you could carry down the street with you, at least not for long anyway. Think about why you're actually purchasing the knife, you want a blade you can surprise an attacker with, and use it to defend yourself.

The sheath

This is more of an accessory for your knife, but having a good strong sheath is critical to ensure you can safely and confidently carry your knife with you. Find a thin and clean design that doesn't make it immediately apparent you're armed when you're wearing your knife concealed. Of course, you may require special permits for this in your state, the best thing you can do is check first, some states are much stricter than others.

Using a knife to defend yourself

When you're in a situation and you truly fear for your life, as you face an attacker who has a weapon and is intent on killing you, it is generally justified to bring out your knife in order to defend yourself. Regardless of the weapon they have, whether it's a baseball bat or a brick, a stun gun or a knife of their own, the key to effectively defending yourself is being prepared.

Learning to use a knife

In a real knife fight, our advice isn't to fight. First you should run. If you cannot run, the key is simply to survive the encounter, defending against your opponents attacks, and if you get an opening seek to disarm your opponent so you can flee the scene and seek help. Getting proficient in the knife you have purchased takes training, practice and effort, but it also requires a full understanding of the consequences that may come from using your knife in a fight. Unlike a police-issue baton that uses blunt force trauma to inflict pain, a sharp knife requires very little force to inflict a great deal of damage. With just a little pressure, you'll leave an unforgettable impression against your attacker, and a single stab wound can even lead to complications and your opponents death.



Source: <http://i.ytimg.com/vi/7C1b7gdshwQ/hqdefault.jpg>

Some self defense courses recommend using a knife as a means of intimidation, but I disagree. There are studies which show knives create more fear in an opponent than a gun, but in some areas brandishing your knife in a threatening manner is a criminal offence, punishable by fines and even jail time. Of course, the laws will be kinder to you if you're caught with a concealed knife over a gun, but you'll be in trouble all the same. In addition, you escalate the violence in a fight if you draw your knife first, which is another legal problem that makes it harder to prove you used a proportionate level of force to defend yourself. Because of these legal issues, we recommend only ever bringing a knife into a fight if you actually need to use it to stop your attacker from killing you.

If you do introduce a knife into a confrontation but you're reluctant or lack confidence in using it, you're probably going to be disarmed very quickly, and you've just given your attacker an additional weapon to use against you. Never carry a knife for self defense if you're unsure you'll be able to use it effectively. There are many local community classes you can take to teach you basic self defense techniques, and in metro area's you'll find a wide variety of different knife fighting courses available. Check out each one, and take the time to get detailed, one-on-one training in the effective use of your knife, so you're calm and confident against any attacker you face.

Seek professional training

To be able to confidently wield a knife in a self-defense scenario you need professional training. There's nothing better than hands-on instruction from a real expert to learn the motions, feelings and movements that you will need to use in order to defend yourself, especially against an attacker who is brandishing a knife of their own. Enroll in a class that provides systematic training with a qualified edged weapons instructor. These type of instructors can be hard to find, because they're not someone you normally come across in a commercial martial arts school. Look for a specialist, because even if a martial arts school offers instruction on blade use, it's going to be watered down and not suited to the extreme combat situations you're going to want to train for in a knife fight in the streets. It's up to you to be a sharp and shrewd consumer here as you seek a mentor to teach you knife fighting techniques, what you're able to learn from them may very well save your life. So do yourself a favor and get the right teacher.

Once you have the basic techniques down, practice is what it takes to hone your abilities with a knife. Your trainer may be able to help here, or you could also work with a trusted partner from the class. By this stage you should already have a strong working knowledge of how to effectively use your knife against an attacker, the key is to practice the drills to further refine your fighting skills. I find the purchase of a rubber training knife to be a great investment, so you can perform full-contact knife sparring, without the risk of injury. This allows you to hone the actual skills you need in a confrontation where you need to take into account your opponents movements and attacks.

In your training you're looking to develop three key elements as you strengthen your ability to defend yourself. First you need the knowledge and understanding of what a knife fight entails, as well as how you can apply the techniques you're learning to a self defense situation. Second is a demonstrated skill (or technical proficiency) in using a knife to defend yourself. This is usually built from hours and hours of practice, ensuring you're familiar with the defensive actions you must take, so each move comes to you naturally, almost without thinking. Finally, you need to consider your attitude, as you become confident you do in fact have the ability to defend yourself with your knife.

Developing your instincts

The best knife training to practice follows the natural movement of your body, and we recommend steering clear of the fancy martial arts techniques where you learn to disarm an opponent with a single hand, your index finger, or any other ridiculous notions. Most of these are not practical against any attacker, let alone a criminal who has been mugging people for years.

The first instinct you will need to overcome is your startle response. When you get confronted, the fight or flight reaction is triggered, elevating your stress levels and sending adrenaline pumping through your body. In your practice sessions seek to control these feelings, so you can follow your instinctive response with movements you've rehearsed thousands of times. This works really well when you've been learning simple motions that are versatile enough they can be applied to any situation. Work on simple attacks like slashes and stabs at varying angles, and a number of different hand positions. Over time you'll find you naturally start reaching the most efficient movement to respond to an attack, as repetition through practice is the source of all skill.



Because knives are one of the primary edged weapons used in street attacks, you need to prepare yourself to react to the first move they will make. Criminals (in general) have a favorite move, and rightly so because it is one of the most difficult to defend against. They'll strike at your abdomen with an upward thrust, often using their non-dominant hand to wield the knife for an added element of surprise. Train yourself to manage this attack with your instructor, as you can be sure this will be used against you in a knife fight. Slashing attacks will typically follow a failed stab, and be wary of knowledgeable attackers who strike multiple times in a very short range of motion - these can be very difficult to defend against without proper training.

Marker training

Once you believe you're getting relatively competent at defending yourself, let's do a little exercise to demonstrate how dangerous even an unskilled opponent with a knife can be. Find someone who has had zero knife training, like your little brother, your partner, or even your daughter, and give them a permanent marker. Take off your shirt and remove the cap of the marker, and tell them to charge you, striking with the marker just like they would a knife. Do your best to defend their attack, and once you've successfully subdued them, count the number of black marks on your body. This is how many stab wounds you would have suffered if they had a knife, and it's an eye opening number considering this is someone with zero training. In close quarters it's very easy for someone to stick you with a blade, even if you've had the right training, and hopefully it demonstrates how dangerous a knife can actually be. Now try it again with your instructor or sparring partner and you'll get an understanding why our first piece of advice when facing an opponent who is wielding a knife is to run.

How a real knife fight will go down

A street fight involving knives is not going to be anything like your training. It's a lethal rough and tumble, and you cannot expect your attacker will abide by any rules or good sportsmanship. Your attacker may fight you with any number of different styles, from the combative techniques taught in the military to the devastatingly effective "prison-yard rush" technique which uses momentum to

overpower a target. The only reason your attacker will pull a knife on you is that they're seeking an advantage in the confrontation, as weapons are not used to fight, they're used to win a fight.

The last thing any attacker wants to do is fight you on an equal playing field. If you're confident they have no other weapons, draw your knife, but remember they probably wouldn't have attacked you with a knife in the first place if they were looking for a fair fight. Watch out for any new weapons the introduction of your knife may trigger, such as a club with additional reach, or a firearm to make your paltry knife irrelevant. Attackers are not looking to fight you, they want to put you out of commission so they can rob you, take their "winnings," and go home.



If you're facing someone who has a knife, realize they're attempting to murder you. They're not going to hold back, or try to strike at your hands to deliver a non-lethal blow. Your attacker is going to want to end the confrontation as hard and as fast as possible using any means necessary. See why we usually recommend running? Defending yourself against such an opponent is hard, but you're going to be best prepared so long as you've had the right (professional) training.

Expect to get cut

It doesn't matter if you're defending with your bare hands against an attacker wielding a knife, or you have your own knife to even the odds. In a fight with knives, you can expect to get cut. Remember the marker training? If you are cut, do not let this stop you. Fight back until you're in control of the situation and you can escape, otherwise you may end up with another and more fatal injury. Knives are capable of inflicting a massive amount of damage on your attacker, but never forget that the same goes for you. In a fight, you may need to trade a cut for a killing blow, just be sure you can land it otherwise you're going to be in big trouble.

The stark reality

A knife fight is not how you imagine it in the movies. There is nothing glamorous about using a knife against another person, it's a brutal and deadly action that will typically see one (if not both) of the participants end up in the hospital, and perhaps even prison. Before you consider bringing your knife into a fight, we highly recommend high-tailing it out of the situation you're in. Trust me. You'll thank us. If this isn't an option, act swiftly and confidently to end the attack as fast as you are able. Finally, remember you cannot use your knife just to threaten someone. This is illegal, and you can get in serious trouble, even if you didn't start the fight. The only time you can wield your knife against your opponent is when you're legally justified to do so.

Actually defending yourself

When you face off against a potential attacker, whether they're hefting a baseball bat or a brick, a stun gun or a blade, you need to ensure your training has prepared you to adapt to the situation, and eliminate the threat. Proper training is more than teaching you how to duel with another knife holder in a practice environment, the skills you're learning must be transferable to keep you safe in a wide range of situations. Again, I'd just like to reinforce here that your initial instinct when facing an attacker who has a knife should be to run. It's much safer than fighting back.

If you are faced with a threatening opponent, the first thing you need to accept is that the knife you have on you is your only means of defense. That beautiful fighting knife you're not allowed to take out of your sock drawer home will not help you now, so you better have developed a working proficiency with the knife you're carrying. Many of the tactical knives recommended by self defense experts are not able to be legally carried in daily use, meaning you either risk getting caught with it by the police, or learn to get proficient with a knife that is legal. Understand this limitation and make sure you account for it in your training. If at all possible, buy a knife that has a training version which is mechanically similar to the live blade, but allows you to safely practice strikes against your partner without inflicting a serious injury. Then you just need to practice deploying the weapon and carrying it with you as part of your daily life. With the proper skills and a sharp, high quality knife, even a folding version with a 2 inch blade you can cut an attacker through to the bone.



Source: <http://www.halsburyslawexchange.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/Knife-Crime.png>

In a real self defense situation, your goal is to inflict enough damage to stop your attacker, so you can escape and get somewhere safe. The entire goal of all your training needs to center around this point. The goal is to escape. First you should run. This will result in far fewer headaches with the law, but if this isn't an option, you're going to have to stop your attacker quickly, decisively, and at minimal risk of yourself being injured. Then all you need to do is escape.

Carrying your knife

There is no point arming yourself with a knife if you cannot get to it in a real self-defense situation. Make sure you've always got easy access to it, keeping it out of your rear pockets or the bottom of your backpack where it is impossible to reach when you find yourself in trouble. In a real fight you may be quickly overwhelmed by your attacker, especially if they jump you from around a corner, and as you're covering yourself to protect from their strikes, you will definitely not have time to sit down and rummage through your purse to find your knife.

Our team of weapons experts recommends buying and using a sheath that allows you to conceal your knife, for two reasons. It allows you to carry your knife in any situation without drawing any

undue concern or attention from the people around you, and it gives you an element of surprise in a confrontation. Fasten your knife at a point on your waistline so it's easy to reach, and our preference is to holster it on your weakest side. This enables you to use your dominant arm to fend off an opponent, while you deploy your knife with your weaker hand to perform a devastating side attack that your attacker may not even see coming. When I'm facing an attacker I want as much advantage as possible, and proudly wearing a knife on my waist (while some self defense experts believe it to work as a warning for criminals to steer clear), I believe actually hinders your ability to fight back because your attacker knows exactly what you're carrying before they jump you, and they've mentally already prepared to deal with it. Give me the element of surprise any day.

Sizing up your opponent

When you believe you have a need to defend yourself, first take a step back and evaluate the entire situation. You will get in serious trouble if you're the one who introduces a knife into a fight, because you're only allowed to use one if you fear for your life, and your opponent is already brandishing a knife, gun or any other weapon in an aggressive manner. Never draw a knife if your attacker is unarmed, (unless of course they're stomping on you or smashing you into the ground and you genuinely fear for your life). When you're approached by someone in a threatening manner, look at their hands, their pockets, and their waistline. If you see a weapon, it's OK to draw your knife. You should always aim to use your knife to avoid a fight altogether, and simply surprising your attacker with a weapon yourself may give you an opportunity to escape. Only ever defend yourself by fighting if you have no other choice.

Do not use your knife to only threaten

Brandishing a knife can be very distracting for an attacker, and many criminals will no longer be interested to attack you once you draw your knife and settle into a defensive stance that demonstrates a level of comfort with the weapon. No sane person ever wants to get in a knife fight, and hopefully as you both square off with blades drawn this is simply the end of it. But before you pull your knife there is one more thing to consider.

Are you ready to use it?

- What if your opponent is crazy and wants to fight?
- What if they've been waiting all week for the chance to have a knife fight with someone?
- What if they simply don't like being called out?

Before you bring a knife into the fight, make sure you're actually ready to use your knife to defend yourself, and you're not going to hesitate or pull a strike because you don't want to inflict a lethal wound on your opponent. We need to reinforce once point here, and that is:

If you're in a situation that warrants drawing a knife, it also warrants the use of lethal force

Your attacker certainly isn't going to hesitate, and any reluctance here from your side could result in you actually losing the fight. Only ever bring your knife out when you have no other choice, and once you've brought it to the fight, use it as it was intended, to ensure you're not the one who loses.

Drawing your knife safely

One of the biggest problems with using a knife for self defense is the time it takes to get your knife in your hand. Even with a sheath, if you're attacked suddenly you will not have time to get your weapon out and into the fight. This is usually because by time you register your attacker has a knife in the fight, you're already under attack. When you're fighting someone who has experience, cunning or just a little street smarts, they will keep their own weapon hidden until they strike, hitting so fast you barely have time to take a step back. Build this situation into your practice, as the only real way you can defend yourself is through adequate preparation.



As you pull a fixed blade knife from its sheath, keep the blade pointed away from your body at all times, just in case your opponent rushes you, you do not want to accidentally stab yourself with your own knife. Keep a firm grip on the handle, and extend the arm holding the knife up and in front of you in a defensive position. To make it easier to draw your knife, you can wear the sheath on the opposite side of your body to your dominant hand, unless of course you're using it as a secondary weapon to your firearm. In this case you would want to draw your knife with your non-dominant hand. There isn't a right way to carry your knife, and much of the technique in drawing it will depend on the actual knife you're using and your personal preference in holding it. Personally I like to be able to draw my knife with my non dominant hand. Consider this as part of your training, and experiment until you find a method of arming yourself that is comfortable and effective.

Storing a foldable knife in your pocket is a habit of many, but this can make it cumbersome to draw if you only have a second to react to your attacker. If you do decide to purchase a foldable knife to defend yourself with, look for one with a quick-release button so you can open it as fast as possible when you need it most. Personally, I do not recommend relying on a foldable knife, it takes too long to arm and in a fight even just half a second of "fiddling" can be enough of a distraction for your attacker to land a fatal blow.

Gripping your knife

To use a knife effectively in a fight you need to learn the proper grip. There are a variety of different ways you can hold your knife for defensive fighting, and again choose a method you are most comfortable with. This will differ based on the fighting style you choose, your strength, as well as the type of blade you're fighting with. To get started the easiest grip to learn is the hammer grip.

Hammer Grip

This is the preferred method of wielding a knife, and much like it sounds, simply wrap your fingers around the handle of your knife as you would grip the handle of a hammer, with the blade's edge facing away from you and the tip pointing to the sky. Some variations of this grip use the thumb to reinforce the back edge of the blade, but in the basic hammer grip simply lock your thumb down tight against your fingers. This secures the knife in your hand, in a very firm grip that will not loosen even if your attacker tries to knock the knife from your grasp. The hammer grip is typically used for long and mid range combat, because it is perfect for large slashes as well as horizontal thrusting movements. You can also use this grip in conjunction with a normal punch, or to strike your attacker with the butt-end of your knife. Just remember to keep your wrist flexible, and only lock it tight on impact.



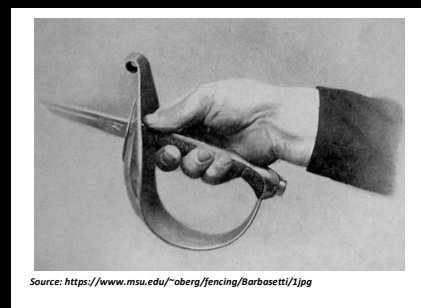
Reverse Grip

This grip follows the exact same concept of the hammer grip, but instead of the blade pointing skyward the knife points back along your arm. You're slightly more limited in the attacks you can perform with this grip, typically only slashing cuts, which can be less effective in close combat as the blade does not get much power and the penetration is less.



Fencer's Grip

When you seek professional knife instruction, they will normally teach you this grip. In the fencer's grip you clasp the knife firmly between your thumb and forefinger, wrapping your other fingers loosely around the handle of your knife. For small knives this is an effective grip, but it really isn't suitable for larger blades. In addition, a solid strike to your hand during a fight while you're using this grip is likely to send your blade flying from your grasp.



Ice-Pick grip

The amount of force that can be generated with this grip is impressive, enabling you to penetrate even soft body armor and heavy clothing. This grip is relatively simple, just hold the knife in your fist with the blade pointing straight down at the ground. Despite its power this strike does have a major drawback, because as soon as you raise your arm in preparation for a strike you make it very clear to your attacker what you're about to do,



in addition to exposing your chest. If they're quick enough you may find your opponent is able to effectively block this strike.

In a knife fight you need to be able to adapt to your surroundings, and one of the best ways to do this in your fighting style is to ensure you're proficient with a number of different grips. If you can master one or two, you'll be in a much better position to defend yourself, should you ever need to.

Taking a fighting stance

Because of the fluidity required to maintain an aggressive offense yet keep your defenses up, it becomes very difficult in a knife fight to attack with precision and force while also protecting your vital organs. It's critical you keep your face, throat, hands, forearms, chest and torso clear of any retaliation strikes, and the best way to do this is using a basic triangle stance.



Source: http://3.bp.blogspot.com/_qWoDaYtjVZc/SSMrr-0W6GI/AAAAAAAAABs/XqIR7wj38Fc/s1600-h/knife+fighting+photos+002.jpg

From this position you can pivot in any direction at a moment's notice, stepping back to avert an attack and swiftly recovering to strike back with maximum reach. Place your weight evenly across the balls of each foot, with one foot about a pace in front of the other, spread your feet shoulder width apart and bending your front knee slightly. This is the foundation of the stance. Keep your elbows tucked in at your sides, while your hands are raised to help defend yourself. Position your checking hand out in front, this is normally your non-dominant hand as you use it to help you gain control over your attacker, assisting your dominant hand that is wielding the knife ready to strike.

Tuck your chin in to protect the throat, and do not forget that the key to an effective knife fight is mobility. Do not plant your feet, rather your aim needs to be to stay light, so you can dodge and retaliate against any attacks, and once you have an opening, escape the situation entirely.

Shielding with your knife

With your arms out in front of you, always position your knife between your body and your attacker. You should expect the opponent you face to be holding their knife in their rear hand, as they follow a similar strategy as your own in using your leading hand to grab their target, pulling them in close to deliver a finishing set of stabs. When your knife is always between you and your enemy, you're better able to defend against every thrust, strike or slash they make.

Keep your spare hand in between your attacker and your vital areas like the heart and throat, so that if your attacker does land an effective strike you can use your arm to absorb the impact rather than having it tear into one of your vital organs.

You can also use your spare arm to parry, punch, distract your opponent or grab at their body to pull them off balance. In the Marines, if there is no other options they are taught to use their spare hand to grab the blade of an opponent, in order to regain control of a situation without risking their life.



Closing the distance

As you face off against your attacker, you need to close the distance between you in order to make an effective attack. Some instructors will teach you to sidestep and block as you move forward, but this is a rather advanced technique that requires you to know how to effectively parry and counter, and for the general public may be too advanced. You're going to want to use a prison yard rush here, closing the distance between you and your attacker with one or two quick strides before you make a powerful stab and end the fight. You should use your knife as an extension of your arm, and be wary of any retaliation should they have a weapon in either of their hands once you're in close.

Staying light on your feet

After rushing in to make your attack, you need to be able to rapidly back out of range, stepping back so that any follow up attack from your opponent misses the mark. Learning to get your hands and feet working together requires practice, but it helps you maximize your effectiveness as you stay mobile in the fight. The more you move around, the harder it is for your attacker to land an effective strike with their knife. When fighting with knives, there are four basic directions you can move:

- Forwards
- Backwards
- Circle right
- Circle left

Practice your footwork drills so you're comfortable moving in any of these directions with balance, speed and stability, and work on always staying moving. As soon as you stop and stand flat-footed your reaction time drops and you're an easier target.

Parrying your attackers blade

This is a technique that hails from sword fighting, and while there isn't much resemblance to gritty knife fights, you can use a parry to give you an advantage. As your attacker strikes at you, sidestep their strike and turn 90 degrees, so you're now facing the outside of the arm your opponent has just attacked you with. Using your knife strike their arm, in an attempt to disarm your opponent. If this isn't possible you can also use your free hand to grab your attackers elbow, taking control of their arm to render their knife ineffective.

Reacting on reflex

The ability to perform a lightning fast attack without any hesitation is an essential component to fighting with a knife. Both your offensive and defensive actions need to be practiced to an extent that they are now instinctual, allowing you to take rapid advantage of any opportunity that arises in a knife fight to win over your opponent. Build speed drills into your training to increase your timing skills and your reflexes.

Your natural weapons

In addition to your knife, don't forget you have a number of other weapons at your disposal that may give you an edge in a street fight. All of these work at close range, and can be an excellent support weapons to your knife, just remember your attacker may also be looking to strike at you with these natural weapons too, so keep an eye out:

- **Fists.** Use your other hand to strike at your opponent.
- **Hands.** Use your other hand to hold, pull or push your opponent.
- **Head.** Can be used to butt your opponent, aiming for the bridge of their nose.
- **Teeth.** Use to bite your attacker, especially good if you're grappling or trapped in a hold.
- **Elbows.** Are a very solid piece of bone to strike at your attacker's head and face.
- **Knees.** Again, very good especially if you're targeting your attackers groin.
- **Legs.** Kicking at their groin and legs to and keep your attacker off balance.

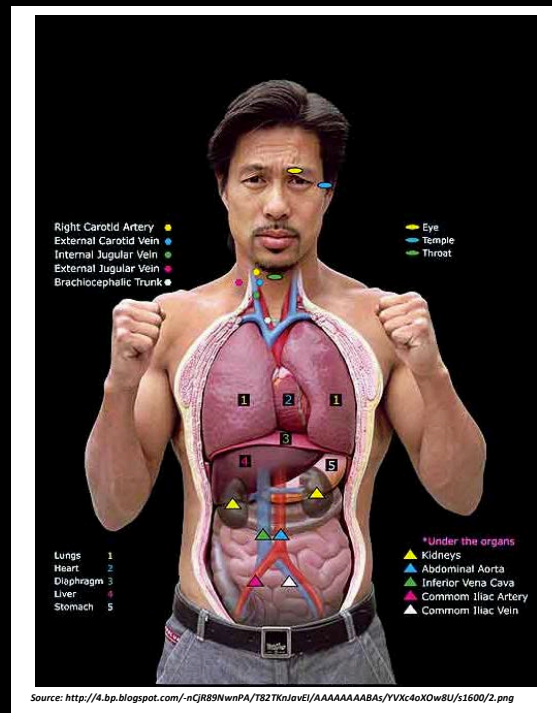
In a knife fight, use every advantage at your disposal to end the fight as quickly as possible. The longer it continues, the higher chance you will be struck with a lethal blow.

After being cut

Once a fight is over, if you've received a bad cut or a stab wound, use a shirt for some padding and apply pressure on the wound, and seek medical attention immediately. Most knife wounds result in blood loss and internal bleeding, and keeping pressure on the cut will help to minimize any loss until the ambulance arrives. Hold consistent pressure on the site of the wound until you're with the paramedics and they can take over.

Where to target your strikes

It takes a little knowledge of human anatomy to know where you can reliably strike to stop your attacker in their tracks. Landing a thrust in precisely the right place is fundamental to good knife fighting skills, as your goal in any fight should only ever be to neutralize the threat. This doesn't necessarily mean that you're always delivering a lethal attack. Your enemy will probably also be in a defensive stance as they protect their own vital organs, so aim your strikes at the most available target. This could be their arms, back, neck or stomach, heck even their leg if you can land a strike. Do not underestimate the ability to draw first blood in a fight, which can be a fantastic psychological boost to strengthen your resolve, and weaken your attackers. Plus, the blood loss they will experience, regardless of where your strikes land will eventually weaken your attacker.



Most systems of lethal knife fighting rely on swiftly closing the distance to your attacker, and delivering a rapid series of potentially lethal thrusts, stabbing into the torso or the neck. The result from such an attack is usually death, however these results are not always immediate. I recently spoke to a handful of doctors and paramedics who deal with trauma on a daily basis, and found that there were many examples of people who were repeatedly stabbed in their body but they were able to continue fighting because of adrenaline. Be prepared for this eventuality, so you're never caught off guard. I prefer a less aggressive target area, and I always teach my students to target the hand of their attacker that is holding their weapon. If you can disarm your opponent, you neutralize the threat, and gain the upper hand in the fight. The only risk here is when both hands are wielding a weapon, say a pistol in the right and a blade in the left, you need to target your attack on the weapon that is the most immediately dangerous to yourself - in this example it would be the pistol.

A particularly nasty attack comes from the knife-wielding martial arts of the Philippines, and is known as biomechanical cutting, or de-fanging the snake. To perform this attack, you target your opponents tendons. Because the tendons are what enables you to move your muscles and bones, if you sever these (or the muscle that supports) them, your opponent will no longer be able to move the affected body part. For the hands, the tendons are concentrated in the underside of the wrist, and an effective attack here will leave them unable to even move their fingers, let alone grip a knife.

The three priorities for you to target with this attack are:

- The flexor tendons in the underside of the forearm. This destroys their ability to grip.
- The biceps and triceps on the upper arm. This ruins the coordination of their arm.
- The quadriceps, just above the knee. This destroys their mobility, enabling you to escape

Performing a cut on these areas will immediately disarm your opponent, and render the entire limb useless. This attack can also work by inflicting massive blood loss, and if you slash into major veins and arteries, like those located along the wrist, in the armpit or in the inner bicep you can cause rapid blood loss that leads to unconsciousness. Any of these strikes should give you the opening you need to escape the situation.

What you need to be careful of with all of these targeted attacks is that stopping power (i.e. what is required to disable your opponent) is not always aligned to lethal power. You can inflict a potentially lethal wound on your attacker, but this may not have an immediate stopping effect. Because of this, you need to remain wary after every attack, and never let your defenses down until you're sure you have completely eliminated the threat. Being cocky or overconfident is ill advised, as your attacker may still be able to deliver a lethal wound on you, right before they die.

Using your bare hands

In a knife fight when you're unarmed you're at a serious disadvantage. Perhaps you were not able to draw your weapon in time, you left it in the glove compartment of your car, or you never got around to buying one in the first place, but don't fret - you still have options. The key is to gain control of your attackers knife before it can be used to inflict any damage on yourself.

The first step is to simply **grab**. Grab the hand holding the knife around their wrist, as hard as you can, and do not let go. If you can maintain some degree of control over their hand that's got the knife, it means it is far more difficult for your attacker to stab you with it. In a fight the weapon and their arm may already be bloody, which can make it difficult to maintain your grip, but do your best. It doesn't matter if you don't have the most effective grip, you just need to be able to control the knife for a few seconds.

Once you've latched onto your opponents hand, throw your body against them to **press and secure the knife** tightly between your two bodies. One of the rules of knife fighting is to avoid close combat situations, but because you had control of the knife when you closed the gap, now you're tight up against your attacker they have no room to swing or stab into you. Of course the blade can still slice and cut, but these wounds are likely to only be superficial.

As you press your two bodies together, put your weight behind your shoulder and use the force to **knock them off balance**, before pivoting your body to send them sprawling onto the floor. If your attacker was prepared and braced against this outcome, immediately switch directions and pull in the opposite direction. You will eventually be able to force them down.

After you've got your attacker on the floor, disengage immediately. This is your chance to escape. Do not risk any further combat, as you will be putting your safety and your escape in jeopardy. Use these precious seconds to get a head start and get out of the situation you are in, thankful you were able to take down a knife wielding opponent with your bare hands.

Maintaining your knife

A dull knife is a dangerous knife, requiring more force to use it effectively, which makes it a hazardous tool in your hands. Keep all of your knives sharp, clean and well maintained, regardless if they're one of your kitchen knives or the one you're relying on for self defense. If you're carrying a folding knife, be sure to oil it regularly to keep the hinge opening as smooth as possible. Then no matter what situation you find yourself in, you're always going to be ready.

How to sharpen a knife

Learning to sharpen your own knives goes hand-in-hand with being a responsible knife owner, because a sharper knife is much safer to use. Freshly sharpened knives have a lower chance they will slip as you're cutting, and require less force and effort to use a knife that has been properly sharpened. Unfortunately keeping your knives sharp is a job many people do not like. Personally I find it relaxing, and if I've bought an especially hard knife with a stainless steel blade, I know the harder it is to sharpen, the better it will hold its edge when in use.

When you first take a new knife home, it's not going to have a deadly edge. One of the first things you'll need to do is sharpen it. To tell when your knife is sharp just run it across your arm (in a shaving motion, not a slicing motion), and once it's sharp it should be able to shave the hairs from your arm. Again, never run your finger along the blade to test the edge. You'll end up slicing your finger. If you do want to use your finger to test the sharpness, run it perpendicular to the blade.



Source: <http://cdn.paulkirtley.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/Knife-Sharpening-06.jpg>

The most effective way to sharpen your knife is with a whetstone, the secret is to simply keep your blade at the same angle as you sharpen the knife. Follow the same angle that's already on the edge from the factory, usually this is anywhere from 12 to 20 degrees. 12 degrees results in a very fine edge, like those you find on a kitchen knife, while 20 degrees is a more solid edge that will hold up better as a utility knife, and stay sharp for longer.

Always move your knife edge-first across the stone, using a light and even pressure along the entire blade. To get a balance as you sharpen the blade count the number of strokes you perform on each side, I like to do 20 on each side before I take the knife and inspect my work. All whetstones require a little bit of liquid to work, and you can use water, oil and even spit to give you the ability to grind away at your knife's edge. The real trick is to be patient and ensure you're consistent in your sharpening motion. Keep the angle the same with every pass, and don't get frustrated and press too hard trying to speed up the process. This does more damage than good. On a high quality knife it can take an hour or two to really get a good edge, especially if you're just sharpening it for the first time. If you're not willing to commit to this amount of time, take your knives down to your local gun shop (or the butchers) and have a professional sharpen them for you.

Staying safe

This one is a no brainer, and because of the inherent danger that is present when fighting an attacker who has a knife, using your knife in a fight should be your absolute last resort. You should only ever use a knife if you cannot avoid the confrontation, and running is no longer an option. But the best defense is simply being alert, and aware of your surroundings so you never find yourself in a situation where you have to defend yourself with a knife.

That's the safest plan by far.

