



## The Importance of Being a Good Drill Partner

To *drill* is to instruct (someone) in something by have them repeat movements or exercises. Repetition is the most important feature of this practice. In combat sports, the numbers that truly matter are not the years or hours on the mats, but rather the cumulative number of repetitions, or reps. When the “fight or flight” response kicks in, whether it is during a street fight or a competition, the most significant factor in determining a successful outcome is your ability to act and react. If you are not able to react without hesitation or delay, then you are going to be starting in a time deficit.

Reaction time is critically important in supporting an individual’s ability to observe, orient, decide, act (a sequence referred to as the OODA loop), and then repeat. Drilling increases the number of reps an individual has completed, and a higher number of completed reps lowers the reaction time. The lower the reaction time, the faster the individual can complete their OODA loop. Completion of a single or multiple successful OODA loops will result in obtaining dominant positions and completing terminating actions.

Drilling is designed to maximize reps, which will increase the ability to win exchanges, which will help an individual win fights. If you are able to increase not just the quantity of reps over time but the *quality* of reps over time then, then the statistical probability of stringing together effective OODA loops, executing successful exchanges, and winning will all increase.

All reps are not equal. It is important to identify the variables of a quality rep so that they can be replicated. Some variables include the efficiency of the technique, speed, velocity, resistance, and timing. The goal of drilling is to do your best to recreate a live scenario in a controlled environment; completing numerous repetitions at a competition speed while an active drill partner presents a near-competitive reaction.

Coordination and adaptation between drill partners takes time and effort. Drill partner “A” cannot perform drills at the highest level unless drill partner “B” is matching them with adequate effort and attention. Being a good drill partner



requires the ability to adjust, and you will need to react differently depending upon who you are working with. A partner who has been training of 5 years, for example, will need you—as a drill partner—to react differently than a partner who has only been training for a few months. A quality drill partner will adapt to the needs of their partner during their prescribed movements. Simply put, a quality drill partner makes their training partners make progress and look good. As a drill partner, you want to provide as much realism to the situation or drill, while still allowing your partner to be successful.

To illustrate this point, it might be easier to imagine filling a giant hole. You and your training partner need to fill this hole with dirt and the only assets you have are a shovel and a wheel barrow. You (the individual for whom the drill is intended) will be operating the wheel barrow. Your partner (your drill partner) will be shoveling the dirt into the wheel barrow. In order to be as efficient as possible, you need your partner to fill your wheel barrow to a practical level— not so heavy that you can no longer move or control it, and not so light that it is no longer effective. If you cannot move your wheel barrow or the wheel barrow is almost empty, then you are not working with a quality partner. Without a quality partner, that hole will take a significantly longer time to fill. Your grappling training is no different. Repetitions—and quality repetitions— are incredibly important to the task at hand. If you hope to compete or even reach a conspicuous level of competency, then you need quality training and drill partners to get there.

At 150 Grappling, the primary goal for first year students is to make them quality drill partners, and our coaches will help get you there. Armed with the knowledge and the ability to drill properly, efficiently, and effectively, all students will excel at a significantly faster rate. When you can start drilling at a quality level early in your grappling journey, your number of significant, high value reps will exceed practitioners with several more years of practice. In the words of Andre Galvão: “You must drill to win.”