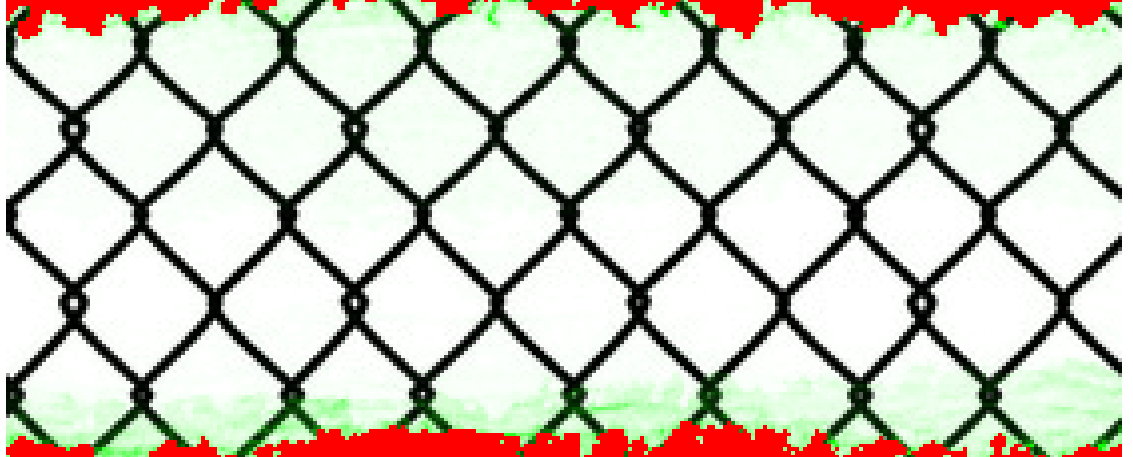


# Alpha MMA - educating the professional coach



## Taking MMA from the cage to the classroom.



Part 3

the art evolves ...  
the coaching evolves.

By Elite Coach  
John B Will

There is no denying the effectiveness and popularity of the MMA wave; however, as new training technologies evolve, so too must the delivery systems for those technologies. The real challenge now, is in how we deliver safe, cutting-edge MMA training to a mainstream audience. How successful we are at achieving this will depend largely on how well designed, streamlined and progressive our program is; and how well we as professional instructors, deliver the training. The goal should be to deliver elite-level training to the mainstream community. Extraordinary results for ordinary people may be the new credo of the decade to come.

## Alpha Supercoaching Strategies

### The 90/90 Rule:

To put it most simply; I believe that for 90 percent of the time, we should teach and instruct the student to prepare for what happens 90 percent of the time. Time is simply too valuable to be spending equal amount of it in training everything; besides, we simply cannot do this; there is too much to be done! As in investments of any sort, the investment should be spread across several areas (diversification) in order to better our overall return and minimize our losses in any one area. The same goes for training. We all, to some degree or another, have a training-spread. We do some of this, some of that, etc. To be more effective though, we need to dedicate more time to the situations and techniques that will come up regularly and less time to those situations and techniques that only occasionally pop their heads up. Eg: Spend lots of time dealing with a big, 'looping overhand right', and less time dealing with 'the way an old lady may come at you with an umbrella'.

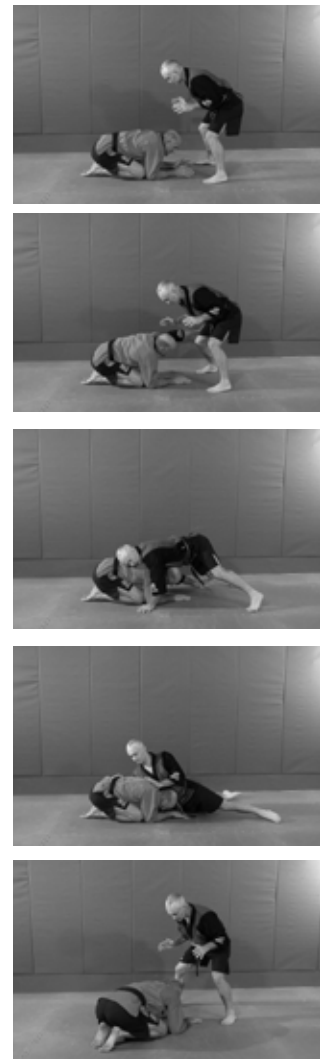
We can also take this principle a little further; rather than practicing an entire move or technique, say, 100 times; we can practice the bit that makes or breaks it (the most important bit) 90 times, and then the whole thing – say 10 times. This is simply more efficient and often more effective. Sometimes to take the ‘takedown’ or ‘finish’ through to it’s conclusion just wastes so much time that we only end up doing a few. Do more of ‘the bit that counts’.

## Masterful Communication:

Rule one - build rapport! You can have the best information in the world; but if the students are not engaged, then nothing is achieved. If I am teaching the military, I will wear army fatigues, not a martial arts uniform. I will do enough research, depending on the group I am instructing, to know what they are about, and as best I can, be able to understand and use their particular jargon. If you are teaching children, get down and talk to them at their level – eye to eye. People relate best to their own, their peers; so you need to ‘fit in’ to a degree and develop rapport before you begin to deliver the information. Building rapport builds trust, which makes their minds more receptive to the information.

One sure-fire method to building trust is to make small promises and keep them. If you tell the student that you will send them that e-mail or post them that book – then make sure you do it!

Stand at the front of the class when demonstrating. Try modulating your voice; sometimes speaking softly at the right moment gets their attention more than yelling loudly. Deliver the information through the use of visual, kinaesthetic and auditory modes; people learn via all three.



## A.D.A.P.T – Analyse, Drill And Pressure Test:

This is a basic principle that I use daily to further develop new techniques and strategies. So it really fits into the Research and Development side of the equation. But it does promote one of the most essential traits of the excellent coach – the act of ‘thinking’ and being ‘observational’. By analysing technique we become more cognizant of how that technique works; we deepen our understanding of the leverage, the mechanics and the timing involved in the technique. By drilling it we develop the muscle-memory needed to execute it under duress. Then by looking at how the opponent reacts as we pressure-test the technique, we learn what to expect from him, and ultimately this allows us to develop effective and realistic combinations.

## Use monosyllabic commands:

Short Commands are a highly abbreviated description of an action or process. Short Commands are comprised of a series of single-words, preferably monosyllabic words that guide a subject or class through an action. It is interesting to note that the words that describe the kinds of actions that are likely to take place during a life-threatening situation are short and often monosyllabic.

Eg: Run, duck, jump, kill, stop, stab, fire, etc. Likewise, Short Commands should be monosyllabic, and if possible, highly descriptive. These are very useful in the teaching process, for several reasons:

- They both allow for and promote a rapid linking of actions
- Long-winded descriptions do little to hardwire new responses. Short, concise descriptions/images make for much faster embedding of new skills.
- Requiring less processing/internal translation, short commands force the class to maintain a faster tempo than do descriptive commands
- Once a technique/process is learned, along with the relevant Short Commands, this process becomes easy to re-deliver to others – by almost anybody.
- As the Short Command methodology continually hits upon and reinforces the main criteria of a technique or action, it is more readily remembered at a later date, even without continual and further training.

## Looking Good and Going Nowhere:

Keep an eye open for this problem. It is an easy trap to fall into. I have been victim many times myself. In other words, always be prepared to look foolish – don't be so worried about 'keeping up appearances' and 'looking good' that you stop taking risks and trying new things. A lot of what we are doing is about exploration, about trial and error, and that means giving it a go, failing, and then learning from that failure. Learning to love failure is one of the keys to becoming highly successful. How many times did Thomas Edison try to build a light bulb before he got it right? This is a very important part of learning and achieving excellence; we need to embrace failure for what it really is; another step closer to achieving our goals. This is a very tough one for martial artists!

## Process not Goal:

Rather than fixating on the goal you want to achieve, learn to embrace the 'process' of 'getting there'. In other words; it's the journey, not the destination, that is ultimately the most important thing. Immerse yourself in the process and the goal will manifest itself.

I remember when I had my first weeks coaching in rock-climbing; I hired Australia's best climber at the time, Malcolm Matheson, and had him take myself and a buddy out for a week of intense climbing. On the first day, we got to a climb (several hundred feet high) but very, very easy foot and handholds (a ladder really). I was standing there looking up at the top of this highly scary climb, and I said to Malcolm, 'I don't mean to tell you your business but shouldn't we start on something a little easier?' He replied 'What are you looking up there for? I just want you to get three feet off the ground.' I laughed, felt foolish, and so climbed easily up the first meter or so (a four year old could have done it) – as I turned to tell him how easy it was, he said to me "good, now repeat!" the lesson to be learned that day was simple; don't be stuck staring at the goal you want to achieve, just immerse yourself in the process instead. This is fundamental to the concept of high art!

## Make Fine Distinctions:

If we are to master anything, we need to learn to make many fine distinctions. For example; an important one that serious fighters and martial artists need to at a fairly early stage is the distinction between discomfort and injury. Many times, especially when students are new to training, they are uncomfortable and mistake this feeling for 'being injured' – and they stop training or begin to shy away from learning as they are too distracted by what they are experiencing to properly engage their mind.

The finer the distinctions we make, the better understanding we have. Eskimo's have many, many different words to describe 'snow' – the really get it, they understand it; of course, they need to, as their lives depend on having a deep and highly personal relationship with snow! Most people, have only one word for it; they don't need to have more than one word for it because their lives do not depend on a deep understanding of it. The closer we look at things, the more we study things, the deeper our understanding becomes. Learn to make fine distinctions about things. Learn to distinguish between fact and opinion for example. Is the belief we have about a technique or training method really based on fact? Or is it just someone's opinion? Making fine distinctions sets us and our students on the path to excellence.

**WE KNOW THESE COACHING TIPS WILL HELP YOU BE A BETTER INSTRUCTOR. AS TRAINING METHODOLOGIES EVOLVE, SO TOO MUST THE COACHING METHODOLOGIES. OUR ALPHA MMA CURRICULUM REFLECTS THIS PHILOSOPHY AND WILL PROVIDE YOU WITH THE VERY BEST MMA TRAINING STRUCTURE - BUT ALSO, AND PERHAPS MORE IMPORTANTLY, THE VERY BEST DELIVERY SYSTEM. WE WISH YOU ALL THE VERY BEST.**

- JOHN WILL

- DAVID MEYER

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