

Greetings from Gintaras Tauras, Knight's Marshal of Ravenslake!

For almost a year now I have been working on my movement in combat. In addition, I have had some of you ask me how to do this. Therefore, I have three drills that you can do on your own (and/or with a partner) to improve your movement/footwork in combat.

1. Exaggerated Walk. This you can do by yourself or with some one beside you. Without weapons, get in your stance as if you had a sword and shield in hand. Lift your back foot off the ground, tap it twice with your toe on the ground, and pause. Now slowly move that foot in an outside arc and tap twice to the outside point, and pause. Next, move it to the front most point, tap twice, and pause. Then, roll the foot heel to toe on the ground, and begin with the other foot in the same way as you did with the first foot.

Repeat this as many times as necessary at a very slow pace. When you end up with nowhere to go (i.e. you reached the far wall of your bedroom), go in reverse. After getting to your starting part, have your arc end at the front right and left sides to practice walking in diagonals. Finally, do a side step by crossing your left foot over to your right a move in that direction and back. This last one you should not do in combat, but it will improve your muscle strength and agility.

After you have done this slowly, begin increasing the speed of the drill. This will greatly strengthen the muscles needed for movement and get you used to moving when you fight. If you have a partner, stand in a line facing one direction (side by side with enough room to arc your legs). Take turns controlling the speed and direction and while the other tries to keep up.

I do this drill in the weight room as I am "cooling down." I have seen great improvement since adopting it a year ago (but saw real improvement within 3 months time).

2. Mirror Drill. This requires two people; one designated as person B and the other as person A. Person A and B stand facing each other. Person A moves forward, backward, side-to-side, etc. while person B attempts to keep the range the same. Stop periodically to check your stance and determine proper foot positioning, correcting it if necessary. After a time of this, switch roles. You can do this for as long as you are out of breath. It is very good at learning movement and footwork, while practicing distance. You can also use a quick version of the Exaggerated Walk to improve your footwork.

3. Bull and Matador. This helps movement, timing, and cutting angles. Have one person walk in a straight line towards you (the Bull). When they are about to run you over, step out of the way at a right or left forward angle (the Matador). This should expose their back. Keep doing this and eventually, mimic throwing a shot at the Bull. Then, after you have done that a few times, have the Bull counter your shot. Eventually, get your armor on and do it again, only after a while you can build the drill into a free-form fight. Once some one dies, then start again.

If you would like a formal demonstration on how to perform these drills, let me know!

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