

Five-Step “Disguised Repetition” Platform, Part 1

Introduction

The term “disguised repetition” is not new, but it continues to be a very important technique to use in your classes. I define the term as a teaching method that directs students to execute a technique or form multiple times, but in a number of different and creative ways that hides or “disguises” their repetition of the drill.

Disguised repetition provides many benefits for students, instructors, classroom spirit and your school.

- Students are exposed to more situations, which means they are more likely to retain knowledge of the techniques required to respond to those situations in the “real world.”
- Students learn easier because the method’s flexibility and creativity allow students to learn differently and at their own rates. By presenting a variety of drills, formations and team exercises, one group of students will learn according to their unique perspective, while another group will learn from an entirely different, but equally viable, point of view.
- Because this method really focuses students’ learning, instructors achieve peak classroom performance.
- More opportunities for instructors to praise and help students individually because they are performing different drills on their own.
- Classrooms are better managed and organized, without obstructing the flow of activity and learning.
- Students still receive repetitive learning, which is necessary for martial arts training, but they aren’t bored because the repetitions are disguised.
- As a school owner, you’re able to achieve maximum results for a large number of students, in less time.
- When your students have more fun and aren’t bored, your retention rate is apt to increase.

The ultimate goals of the disguised repetition method are for students to execute the technique 100 to 200 times during a 10- to 15-minute set and to improve their skills by a factor of 100 to 200.

Incorporate the Five-Step Disguised Repetition Platform with your curriculum and you’ll notice average instructors performing above average and the smiles of fun on students’ faces and smiles of satisfaction from their parents. The method is easy to learn and implement.

The Five-Step Disguised Repetition Teaching Platform

There are literally hundreds of disguised repetition drills that can be created from a multitude of situations and scenarios: self-defense, tournament, graduation, multiple attackers, demonstration team, talent show and entertainment (movies, TV, video games, etc.).

The five steps of the disguised-repetition teaching platform are easy to memorize and put into action quickly to increase skills levels, fun and the achievement of students’ goals. They are:

- 1) To the Front
- 2) In a Circle
- 3) Team Challenge
- 4) Partner Drill
- 5) Line Drill

Once your instructors learn the five steps, they’ll be able to introduce hundreds of games and drills to develop your championship students, while they have fun. The five steps are flexible enough to be used with basic and sparring techniques and, with a slight change, any traditional, open or weapon forms.

Step #1: To the Front

“To the front” is the standard method virtually all martial arts classes are taught throughout the world.

BLACK BELT MANAGEMENT

MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES FOR THE OWNER AND INSTRUCTOR

Teaching to the front, or toward the mirrors, is a great teaching tool if instructors know how to use it properly and why. Since most schools use this method during 90% of their classes, you are probably very familiar with it. I will encourage you to review and use “to the front” quickly and to move to steps 2, 3, 4 and 5.

The benefits of teaching “toward the front” are:

- It is easy to learn.
- You’re able to use reaction drills.
- Self-improvement.
- Black Belt practice time.

Easy to learn: Students face the same direction and are able to watch their and other students’ moves in the mirror, while following the instructor’s direction.

Reaction drills: When you say, “Go,” students attempt to react and complete the technique as fast as possible. Some instructors, and you may be one of them, use words, such as “go,” “kick” or “punch” throughout the class, instead of reserving those command words for reaction drills, competition between students or at the beginning of a drill only a few minutes in duration. Restrict your use of these words, so they generate more excitement during specific activities. If you say these words more than three times in a row, then it should only be for a reaction game.

Self-Improvement: Students are able to improve their techniques by watching themselves in the mirror. Mirrors are such a natural part of most schools that it is easy to forget that they serve a great purpose *if students know how to use them*. You and your students have probably executed thousands of drills facing to the front, but if you’ve avoided using the mirrors as a self-improvement method, then you’ve probably overlooked an excellent learning opportunity. Imagine how quickly your students could advance if they watched and evaluated their techniques with the use of the mirrors after each repetition.

The “mirror method” empowers and energizes every lesson and requires students to be responsible for some of their improvement. I recommend a simple test of the use of mirrors.

- Select and teach a technique.

- While your students are practicing, observe how many students are actually using the mirrors to evaluate their performances.
- If there are many, then you have done an excellent job of teaching your students how to use the mirrors as a learning tool.
- If few students are using the mirrors, then stop your “test” technique and teach them the value of the “mirror method” and the dramatic impact it will have on their performances, whether they’re beginners, intermediates, advanced or Black Belt.

Black Belt Practice Time: Allocate most of your class time to facing-to-the-front drills, or Black Belt Practice Time; first because it’s fun and second because it teaches students to be self-reliant.

- Your goal is to shift your students to the highest gear.
- Play appropriate music to create a Black Belt atmosphere.
- Students are responsible for memorizing and practicing the techniques you’ve introduced on their own.
- As your class practices, energetically move through the classroom, helping, praising, highlighting and motivating students to demonstrate better techniques.
- Ask your students to pause for a brief moment as you spotlight an incredible student or show them a more advanced way of doing the technique.
- Limit your students’ self-teaching to approximately two to three minutes, and then command them to take an attention stance.

Step #2: In a Circle

Performing in a circle benefits students in various ways:

- Enhanced footwork and physical coordination.
- Better awareness of the surrounding environment.
- Greater peripheral vision.
- Experience with multiple attacker situations, including mass attack.
- Quicker, clearer thinking and acting under pressure.

BLACK BELT MANAGEMENT

MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES FOR THE OWNER AND INSTRUCTOR

Teaching In a Circle

- Students are in the attention stance from the end of Step #1.
- Demonstrate the technique you've selected, as if imaginary opponents surround you.
- When you complete the technique, turn your head as if you are reacting to another attacker.
- Execute the technique, repeating it again and again, as you rotate in a circle, reacting to a series of attackers.
- It is very important to create the proper vision, one that is believable to students. They will only execute techniques "in a circle" as well as you or your instructors.
- Once you've completed the demonstration of the technique, command students to practice it.
- Make sure your students turn their heads, focus and perform the technique to their best.
- Command them to relax for a quick moment and then repeat.
- If you're teaching a sparring technique, then command students to bounce, lunge to defend, execute the technique, return to the start position, turn to the next direction of imaginary attack and repeat.
- Play appropriate music, as your students practice the technique and you walk among them, providing energetic feedback.
- After approximately 90 seconds of technique practice, command your students to switch directions.
- As you reach the end of the two- to three-minute session, shout the "Mass Attack" command.

Students must execute the technique as fast as possible, as if attackers are everywhere. (For my students, I describe the scene from the movie, *Matrix*, when the Keanu Reeves character must face hundreds of attackers surrounding him.)

As your students move "in a circle," they will discover that they must adjust their balance, which improves their footwork and coordination skills. It is much more challenging to turn, look, shift your weight and stance

and then throw a front kick than it is to just stand to the front and do the technique, repeatedly.

When your students turn and look, they are increasing their awareness skills. They will learn that an opponent may not always face them directly. They are just as likely to approach a defender from the side, with a sneak attack. Teach your students to use and improve their peripheral vision by watching for side attacks.

The "in a circle" method will help your students develop the quick-turning skills and mental preparation to confront multiple attackers, successfully. Mass attack scenarios are both fun and beneficial because they force your students to move very fast. Experiencing the pressure of a multiple, or mass attack, scenario in the safety of the classroom better prepares students to perform under pressure in the martial arts and all other aspects of their lives. This "pressurized" challenge will also build confidence.

Remember, it is very important to praise proper training habits and Black Belt qualities throughout every class.