

# Economy of Motion

By Rich Hale

Economy of Motion has mostly to do with moving from the point of origin and doing moves “with” one another instead of doing moves one after the other.

And: The word "and" implies one or more wasted beats of timing. In Kenpo we try to eliminate using the word "and", because it involves wasted time and is, therefore, contradictory to the principle of Economy of Motion. In Kenpo we use the word "with", so that one strike is coupled "with" another.

Before going further, I agree that many practitioners could benefit greatly by eliminating some of the wasted motion/time in their Kenpo - we all could. But, on the other hand, I think the principle “Economy of Motion” is all too often treated as if were the only principle in Kenpo.

Mr. Parker once told me he hated it when people carved everything he said into stone. He said he once asked a student, at a school he was visiting, to do a technique on the left side. Then he heard people whispering, “Oh, the left side, the left side, do it on the left side!” He then says he comes back ten years later and they were a left-handed Kenpo school.

So what I’m saying is, the more adept should not totally eliminate the word “and” from their vocabulary. To think everything must be done simultaneously is just as big a mistake as thinking everything must be done independently. Look back at Mr. Parker’s definition of the word “and”. He says “we try to eliminate using the word “and”. He didn’t say we totally eliminate using the word “and”.

We also need to go back to the Encyclopedia of Kenpo and read the description of the term “with”.

With: A very useful word in the Kenpo vocabulary, which is reserved for the more adept. It involves a dual movement and eliminates the word "and". One doesn't block "and" then strike. He blocks "with" a strike. Employing this principle eliminates wasted motion and economizes on time.

Think about this. He didn’t say that eliminating the word “and” will make us more adept. He said the more adept should eliminate the word “and”. But to eliminate “and” too early, or worse yet, entirely, can lead to having quick, inaccurate and underpowered techniques.

Picture yourself defending against an opponent delivering a right punch to your head. You can (for this example) defend yourself with this simple technique done in two different ways:

The One Step Method:

1. Execute a left inward block to your opponents’ right punch, with a right kick to your opponent’s groin while simultaneously delivering a right heel palm strike to his jaw.

The Two Step Method:

1. Execute a left inward block to your opponent’s right punch, with a right kick to your opponent’s groin while you simultaneously counterbalance your right kick by whipping your right hand directly back and behind you.
2. Immediately drop into a right neutral bow while striking your opponent with a right thrusting heel palm strike to his jaw.

The first method is quicker, but the second method is more powerful, thus having a more substantial and sustaining effect on your opponent.

Again we go to the Encyclopedia of Kenpo:

Economy of Motion: Entails choosing the best available weapon for the best available angle, to insure reaching the best available target in the least amount of time. Any movement that takes less time to execute, but still causes the effect intended. Any movement that inhibits, or does not actively enhance the effect intended is categorized as Wasted Motion.

To paraphrase: Any strike that does not have a substantial and sustaining effect on your opponent is wasted motion. This begs the question - what's the hurry? As a rule, we're sufficiently fast enough to accomplish the task at hand, but for some reason we "must" be faster and faster and faster. Sometimes our desire to be faster reaches the point that our Kenpo becomes the very thing it's regularly accused of being - a slap art. Personally, I don't want people to consider the art I study to be a slap art and I don't want them to consider me to be a slap artist.

Let me just touch on a different term for a minute; the Outer Rim Theory, as defined by Mr. Parker:

**Outer Rim:** An imaginary egg shape circle that is used as a visual aid. This egg shaped pattern starts at the eyebrow level, and ends slightly below the region of the groin. This concept teaches you to confine the defensive movements to those areas within the imaginary circle. You learn never to overextend, nor overcommit, beyond the circle with your arms and hands. To do so not only exposes your vital areas, but limits your ability to counter quickly.

I once asked a practitioner of Kenpo why his strikes were so short and why he always kept everything so close to his body. His response was he was trying to keep within his outer rim. So, I asked him to define what the outer rim was. He said it was an imaginary egg shaped circle, etc., that your movements should be kept within, as per Mr. Parker.

If you didn't already see the error in his thinking let me point it out specifically. The outer rim principle instructs you to confine the "defensive" movements to those areas within the imaginary egg shaped circle, not all your movements. Mr. Parker himself, was known to go way beyond his outer rim in preparation for a strike. It was this gentleman's misinterpretation of the outer rim principle that had led to his Kenpo being off track.

To emphasize that the Outer Rim Theory was specific to defensive movements, Mr. Parker coined another term for the area that offensive movements should stay within:

**Outer Perimeter:** That imaginary circle surrounding the head and feet that "offensive" moves should be confined to if you wish to render greater power and speed when executing such action. That is not to be confused with the Outer Rim principle which request that you not overextend, or overcommit, your "defensive" moves.

As clear as Mr. Parker tried to be with his terminology; people still seem to either misinterpret terms, or gravitate to certain terms, concepts, theories and principles while forsaking other terms, concepts, theories and principles, that give our system balance.

For example, the term "with" is used more frequently to combine strikes with blocks, checks and covers than it is to combine strikes with other strikes. Below I've written out the first self defense technique we come to in orange belt - Clutching Feathers. I've highlighted the simultaneous strikes with blocks, checks and covers in blue, while highlighting strikes done with other strikes in red and strikes done independently in green. Note: I didn't include simultaneous foot maneuvers and stances as they're uniformly done simultaneously with striking, blocking, checking, etc.

1. While Standing Naturally, step back toward 6 o'clock with your left foot into a right neutral bow (facing 12 o'clock). Simultaneously pin your opponent's left hand to your head with your left hand as you thrust a right vertical middle-knuckle fist to your opponent's left armpit.
2. As your opponent begins to bend over and toward you, pivot into a right forward bow (facing 12:00) as you deliver a left thrusting heel palm strike to your opponent's jaw, simultaneous "with" a right extended outward block to the inside of your opponent's left forearm.
3. Immediately pivot back to a right neutral bow (facing 12:00) while delivering a right inward raking back knuckle strike diagonally across the bridge of your opponent's nose.
4. Without disrupting the flow and momentum of your right hand strike, pivot counterclockwise into a right reverse bow (while slightly altering your orbit), and convert your right hand into a right downward hammerfist strike to your opponent's groin. Simultaneously have your left hand check near the right side of your face.
5. Immediately pivot back to a right neutral bow, facing 12 o'clock, while executing a right outward back knuckle strike to the right side of your opponent's face. Simultaneously have your left hand positionally check.
6. Utilizing Progressive Directional Harmony, have your left foot cross over and in front of your right foot into a

left front twist stance, facing 12 o'clock. Prior to planting your left foot execute a left vertical punch to your opponent's sternum, simultaneous with a right horizontal forearm check, below your left punch. As your left foot plants into the twist stance, execute a right inward horizontal elbow strike to your opponent's left maxillary hinge. Simultaneous with this strike execute a left inward horizontal heel palm strike to his right maxillary hinge, thus causing a sandwiching effect.

7. Simultaneously, thread a right knee kick to your opponent's groin, execute a right outward heel palm strike to his solar plexus, execute a left inward five-finger circular claw across your opponent's face.
8. Commence by having your left hand hook around the left side of your opponent's neck, and with your left elbow anchored, pull his head forward and down. Then simultaneously drop into a right neutral bow, facing 12 o'clock, as you execute a right inward overhead hammerfist to the back of your opponent's neck.
9. Pivot into a transitional right reverse bow, as you roll your right forearm clockwise to hook your opponent's head, guiding it down and toward your right leg. Instantly flow into a right knee kick to your opponent's face.

A further study into additional techniques will show a considerable amount of consistence in three things.

1. Strikes, blocks, checks and covers are often done "with" one another.
2. Strikes, blocks, checks and covers are often done "independently" of one another.
3. Haymaker strikes are rarely done "with" other strikes.

I think we're all familiar with what "haymaker" strikes are. They're the real powerhouse strikes at, or near, the end of our base techniques. The final hammer in Thundering Hammers, the final vertical punch in Parting Wings, the final knee in Crossing Talon, etc. With a few exceptions, haymaker strikes are only done in unison with foot maneuvers, checks and covers and not "with" other strikes. By the time we deliver a haymaker we've already thwarted our opponent's attack and hit him several times. The haymaker is a strike that's intended to do some real damage to our opponent. It's the strike that's supposed to stop our opponent's aggression right then and there. Haymaker strikes are the same thing as what Mr. Parker defines as "Major Moves".

Major Moves: Strong and positive moves which cause immediate devastation.

Now, with the above information in mind, it's illogical to think that we need to do everything "with" everything else. You can block "with" other blocks and strike "with" other strikes. You can block "with" strikes and you can use foot maneuvers, checks and covers "with" everything you do, but save some time for the haymaker!

Economy of motion is a major principle of Kenpo and the term "with" exemplifies economy of motion. But, Kenpo is a system; don't let any one principle, within the system, rule above all the others.