

## Chapter 9: Force Continuum

"If your only tool is a hammer, every problem looks like a nail." This unknown author has made a very important statement about the proper application of self defense in these litigious days. How much force can a Martial Artist apply to any given situation? To continue the metaphor, what is the right tool for the job? We can all agree that if someone is simply calling you names, it is not appropriate to break his nose? More importantly what will Law Enforcement, the District Attorney or a Judge deem "reasonableness" within the "totality of circumstances" consider appropriate use of force in any given situation.

Law enforcement has their well defined concept of a "Force Continuum" which gives boundaries of the amount of force that is acceptable in any given situation. Though the concept of Force Continuum is critically important, it does not exactly apply to a civilian Martial Artist that has no commissioned or proper trained "to serve and protect" the themselves or the community.

As responsible citizens and trained Martial Artist some may feel a duty to protect themselves and their fellow man from harm which could result in a law suit or criminal action against you. To help instructors throughout the USA, this article is written provide a "Martial Artist Force Continuum" in the appropriate use of our Martial Arts training in the real world.

The Martial Arts Force Continuum is broken down into six broad levels. Each level is designed to be flexible as to the need for force as a situation evolves. It is not uncommon to see the level of force move from one level to another and then and back again in a matter of seconds. In addition the lowest level of force may not always be appropriate if the Martial Artist can articulate that a higher level of force was reasonable. Likewise the skipping of steps may be appropriate given the resistance encountered.

The following chart provides a brief description of 3 levels of actors from whom you may be confronted by (Who are they). Each of these actors may behave essentially in two different modes (How they behave) and therefore there are 6 levels of escalated response that may be deemed appropriate (Your Options).

This chart is essentially showing you that not all actors are deadly assailants (nails) therefore the law expects you to have less lethal tools than the hammer (deadly force) in your tool belt.

<b>Who Are they</b>	<b>How they Behave</b>	<b>Your Options</b>
<b>Assailant</b>	Gun or Knife Blunt Weapon	Deadly Force Break Bones, Knock Outs
<b>Aggressive</b>	Moves Toward You Keeps Safe Distance	Holds and Pressure Points Chemical Spray
<b>Argumentative</b>	Threats and Gestures Verbal Abuse	Persuade, Advise & Warn Strong Posture