

# Structure



All martial arts have a specific structure. It is this structure that makes their art work. To understand any martial art you must first look at its structure. You can think of structure as a base of operations from which the attacks and defense of a particular art spring from. Structure is the base from which the art grows from. Structure is the roots from which the branches of the art spring from. To understand any art is to understand its structure. Bruce Lee said that to defend against another art, you don't need to learn that art, but you must be able to understand its delivery system. The delivery system is the means by which the attack comes from point A, (the attacker) to point B (the defender). To a great extent this delivery system is based on the structure of the art of the attacker while the defender bases his defense on the structure of his art.

One of the problems of style as Bruce Lee saw it was that a student of a particular style only understood things from the perspective of his style which is mostly based on its structure. To understand this we need a short history lesson. When I was teaching Kung Fu in the late 1960's, style was everything. If you were a kempo man you didn't also train in karate or kung fu. You mostly practiced against other people from your style. The only time that you saw another style was when you went or participated in an open karate tournament, but even then their were specific rules that made the difference in style seem minor. These tournaments were also limited in scope because they were non-contact. At Ed Parker's yearly International Karate Tournament you had various Japanese, Chinese, and Korean styles competing. Their methods of defense and attack were based but also somewhat limited by their structure. I went every year to this tournament as I usually had some students fighting in it so as was able to see structure in action as it were.

A Korean fighter like Chuck Norris had a stance that allowed him to kick efficiently while still being able to punch as it was not too deep or too narrow. A fighter like Joe Lewis used a deep horse stance which limited his attack to mostly his front hand and foot, but also gave him a strong defense. A Shotokan karate man would have a deep front stance which would give him a strong base for linear attacks like a step thru punch or a straight rear kick. Their delivery system was based in large part on their structure. It was part of Bruce's genius to look at an art and to understand its structure and its limitations. It was very hard for anyone in the 1960's or 70's to see the limits of their structure because the rules of the non-contact tournaments didn't allow someone to take advantage of possible weakness in the structure of your opponent. For example, while you could do a leg sweep you weren't allowed to kick the leg.

Once full contact matches started things changed. The first on the scene was kickboxing. Fighters soon discovered that their karate type punches were not that efficient with boxing gloves on, and they soon turned to boxing trainers for help. Kickboxing then became a mixture of karate kicking and boxing punches, but kicking to the leg was still not allowed. When the kickboxing in Japan added leg kicks, we saw the advent of Thai boxing. Any deep horse type stances would no longer work. This was proven when Hong Kong sent five of its best fighters to Thailand to compete against five Thai fighters. Not one kung fu man lasted more than 1 round.

Before any of this was going on, Bruce Lee had already changed his art. He difference was that he did it ten years before anybody else. Bruce had discovered in a fight that his wing chun style was too limited. He felt that there were universal truths to combat that could be discovered if only one could look beyond the confines of style. He wanted to come up with a structure that was based on mobility so any deep stance was too limited for him. He could see some one like Muhammad Ali move and control distance so he always seemed just out of his opponent's reach. Bruce then developed a modified boxing stance where he could punch or kick with ease. Bruce wanted more angles of attack than wing chun offered him, so he added basic boxing repertory to his art. When he realized that his front hand finger jab could be used like a foil in fencing, he added many principles from Western fencing and called his art Jeet Kune Do or the way of the intercepting fist. He got the name from fencing theory as fencers feel that the most efficient method to deal with an attack was to intercept it before it can be fully developed.

The next big change came about with the beginning of the "no holds barred" types of matches like the UFC. Kickboxers who entered soon found that they had little defense against being taken to the ground, or any way to get back to their feet again. Kickboxers discovered that they need to learn some grappling skills if they wanted to survive in the ring. Later grapplers learned that they need learn some punching and kicking if they want to survive in the ring, and what we ended up with is mixed martial arts. Most fighters that we see today in the ring are a mixture of various grappling arts, Thai boxing, and Western boxing. Today one of the most popular martial arts is called mixed martial art which is basically a mixture of grappling and stand up arts. The question is just how do you mix martial arts? How do you mix arts that may have different structures? Do you try to learn all the structures then flow from structure to structure, or do you take one structure and then add what fits into that structure?

Jeet Kune Do is an example of the last method in that it has one structure and adds only those things which fit that structure. The Wednesday Night Group has tried to do the same thing as we have investigated other arts. The first thing we did was look at the strengths and weaknesses of what we teach. The main weakness that we saw in our JKD was that it had very little grappling. We decided that we needed to be familiar with how a grappler attacks and how to

defend against it. We decided that we to learn to survive in the street and not the ring. We wanted to focus avoiding being taken to the ground, but if we were taken to the ground we wanted to be able to get up again as soon as possible.

I was fortunate to have worked with some of the best grapplers around. I've worked with people like Larry Hartsell, Mark McFann and Eric Paulson. Our garage group has been fortunate to work with people like Bert Poe who was interested in ending the fight as soon as possible and had a no nonsense approach to fighting and grappling. We also worked with a great former college free style wrestler, and we've now have someone with good background in Greco-Roman wrestling.

We started by using a basic JKD method of training called "before, during and after". What this means is that we look at something in the following manner:

1. Before means that we look at the distance the attacker is from us and how the structure of his art has him enter to grapple with you.
2. During means that he's moving toward you or is grappling you high like a Greco-Roman wrestler, or performing a high single or double leg take, or a low single leg.
3. After means that he's gotten a hold of you and is either taking you to the ground or is placing you in a lock or choke. It can also mean that you've been taken to the ground.

We then look to see if we have the tools to deal with each attack. If we don't then we try to come up with one. We start this by looking at the rules that each type of grappler is used to see if we can find any weakness in what they are used to dealing with. We look at how the structure of the art is taught. Do they do a low single leg takedown so that it is hard to strike them in the eyes or do they offer their eyes by doing a high leg take down? Another example is that when a good Jiu Jitsu man takes you to the ground he tries to establish as base from who to continue the attack. We then look for ways to disturb his base to help us get back on our feet again.

We look at other arts for two basic reasons. One is to see if we have the tools to defend against them. To do this we look at the other art's structure and their delivery system. We then look at the art and see if it has something to offer us that we're lacking or may be a better way to do something. We're not looking to add for the sake of adding. We're not looking for the 47th way to deal with a boxer's left jab. What we're looking for is a better way. One good example is how we looked at Thai boxing.

While Bruce Lee had written many personal notes on using the knees and elbows in combat, he hadn't up to the point of his death taught much of it to his students. We felt that learning more about how to use knees and elbows would be a good thing, and where else to look it study it would be better than Thai boxing which uses them in all their full contact matches. When we starting working on that aspect of Thai boxing we quickly learned that it fit the basic structure of our stance which is similar to a boxer's stance but maybe a little wider than shoulder width. We also felt that the rear legged round kick that the Thai's use had great value because of its tremendous power. The first time Bob Bremer saw us working on it the said, "That's a great kick, but not on the initial move."

Bob was correct because Thai boxing has a different structure from JKD and from a JKD structure the kick is not that efficient if done on the first move. Let me explain.

The Thai boxer stands with his shoulders square and his toes of his rear foot about even with the heel of his front foot. It is this narrow stance that allows his to kick his opponent's front leg without being that easy to see as the kick does not have that far to travel. With the basic JKD stance the kick is too easily seen. To use it in the ring or street as the first move of an attack from our stance would be to invite a counter. We would have to use it from the basic Thai structure. Many JKD students do it this way or make the mistake of doing it form a JKD structure, but we've chosen to do everything from a JKD structure. We do the rear leg Thai kick but "not on the initial move".

In conclusion to understand the art you are doing or to understand the art of another look at the basic structure of the art as that is the basis of understanding.



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