

Effective Communication:

A dojo's design is comparable to a standard classroom. If seating is the students' choice in a learning environment, the students who are interested in mutual communication between themselves and the instructor sit in the front and the more passive students sit farther away. In a dojo, students work years to be a part of that front row, but once they are there they enjoy an interpersonal relationship between themselves and their instructor.

No matter the learning environment, it is the students in the back of the room that are the least likely to receive the teacher's message in completion and with clarity. In a dojo, the most novice students are in the back, yet they are the ones with the most to learn.

Noise is any signal that disrupts the accuracy of the message being sent. Noise can be both **physical** (someone tapping or humming, children playing outside, parent observers) and **psychological** (daydreaming, personal problems, attitudes). No matter the case, noise prevents the message sent from being the message received.

How can I help my student learn?

Relative positioning is a term that martial artists use to describe the position opponents take relative to one another. This term is also used in the teaching profession to describe the teacher's position relative to the students.

Instructors have worked their entire career to be the person that is in the front of the classroom. This is the most prized position in the room and many instructors refuse to move off of that spot.

Instructors need to ask themselves if their sent messages are the messages received by the people in the back row, who, coincidentally, are the most novice students and need to hear the messages the most clearly. Take into consideration the classroom student who chooses to sit in the back of the room...students in a dojo do not choose their *relative position*.

People in the back not only perceive the most **physical noise**, due to the fact that 20+ students stand between themselves and the instructor, but they also work against the most **psychological noise** because they know the instructor is least likely to have direct discussions with someone in the back of the room.

To reach every student, a teacher needs to continually change his/her *relative position*. Although we value that front-and-center space, it is probably the least effective teaching position in the room. As an effective teacher, vary the places in which you conduct whole-class instruction and filter yourself among the students to deliver one-on-one instruction. By changing your position, the people in the back of the room are more likely to receive messages clearly and completely. In addition, the **psychological noise** is likely to decrease, because they are more focused on the teacher who is now standing next to them instead of 30 feet away.

Evaluate Yourself:

To truly effect every student, a teacher needs to spend as much time in the front as they do in the back...as much time on the right side as they do on the left side. Although we think we do this, participating in this simple evaluation will define your actual patterns.

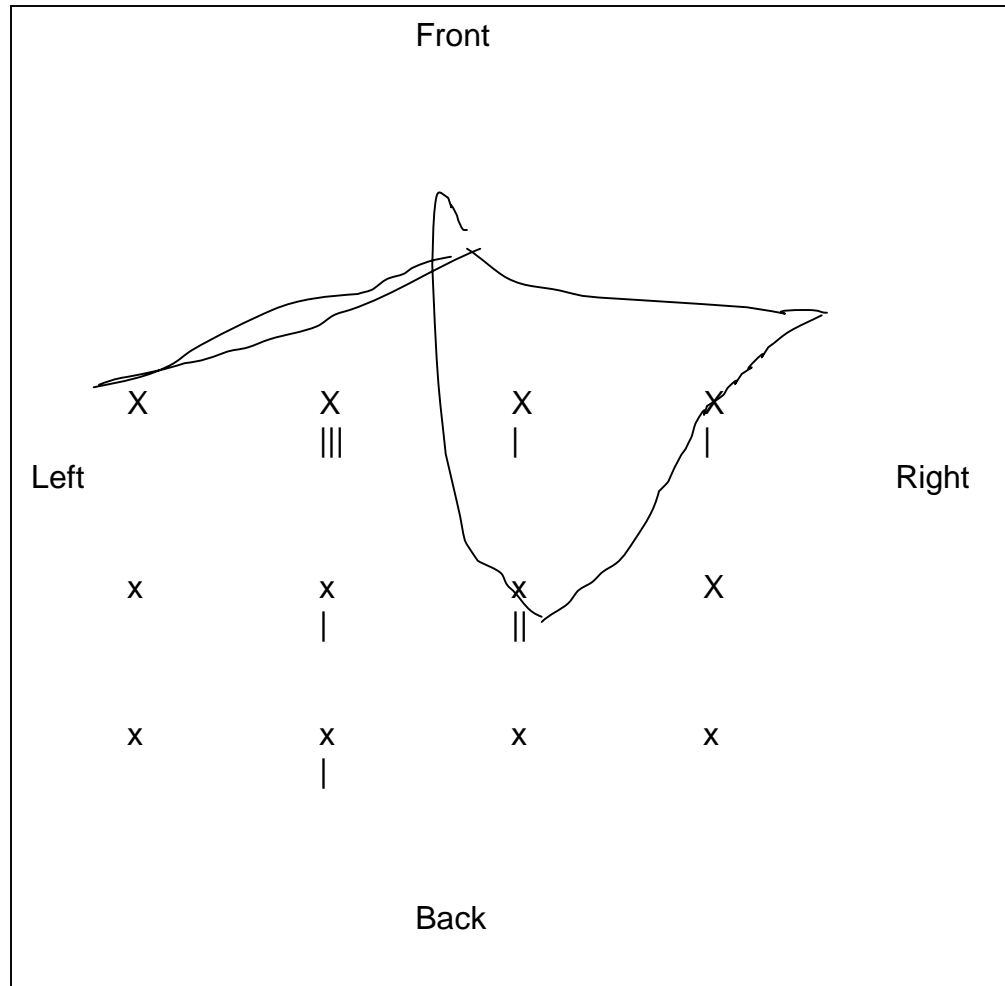
Ask a third party to evaluate your *relative positioning* for a period of time during your class. This evaluator will sketch the room, including where the students are standing. Then the evaluator will track your movement for the designated period of time. In addition, if you are interested to know if you include each student equally, have the evaluator tally mark each instructor/student interaction.

When reviewing your evaluators sketch, analyze your trends. Are you front-and-center a majority of the time? Do you mostly interact with students on your right hand side (which is an actual trend for right handed people)? Do you interact more often or longer with the girls than the boys?

The results may surprise you!

Written by: Shihan Ginger Dunn

Sample Evaluation:




Key:

X – adult

x – child

| - direct teacher/student interaction

 - instructor's relative position over 20 minutes of instructional time

Analysis:

- This teacher spends equal time on the right side as they do on the left.
- This teacher rarely walks among the students.
- When interacting with students, this instructor mainly talks with people directly in front of him/her and rarely interacts with people on the sides or in the back.

Mizu-ryu: Living History



Florendo M. Visitacion
(1910 – 1999)

Master Visitacion, more commonly known as Professor Vee, was born in the Philippines and began his martial arts training in Arnis. By 1955, Prof. Vee introduced Vee Jistu, the art by which he became famous.

Master Vee was the person who taught me the importance of body conditioning. When I had the opportunity to train with him, he was already in his 70's. He was a small man, at 5'2" and 125 pounds, but he was built of stone!

During a seminar that he taught, he focused a portion of his class on the body conditioning exercises. Yet, many of the participants were not performing to Master Vee's expectations. He chose to re-demonstrate the exercise, using me as his uke. I was trying as best as I could to act like a formidable opponent which was a difficult task, even though he was more than twice my age, a foot shorter, and 50 pounds smaller than me.

Now it is more than 30 years since I first met Master Vee, and I still value his teachings and practice his exercises. As a martial arts athlete body conditioning benefits you by enabling you to absorb strong contact with little personal effect. You develop your pain tolerance. As a result, your class time experience will be more enjoyable and productive.

Some exercises that I learned from Master Visitacion include:

- Backfist to backfist hand conditioning
- Cobra strike to forearm arm conditioning
- Torso conditioning with breath control
- Leg conditioning to include thigh, hamstring, shin, and calf

Dictated by: Soke Martin Ferrick

Written by: Shihan Ginger Dunn

Congratulations!

- The Dunn Family is expecting a baby girl this March. Grandpa Soke is already planning how he can spoil his grandchild rotten, and then he'll send her back to her parents!
- Daughter's of the Arts had their first California event. On October 27th. Dinner was great and our discussion on "The Biological Effects of Stress as They Relate to the Martial Artist" was well received by the attendants.
- Tonia Piscitelli has volunteered to be the Florida Representative for DOTA. We are now a coast-to-coast organization.
- Morgan Edwards tested in October and received the second 90% score in more than eight years! Tonia Piscitelli received that honor a few before. You are among a very few elite, wear your Starburst Patch with pride!

Sempai / Kouhai:

The Sempai (senior student) Kouhai (junior student) is a relationship that has existed in martial arts for years, yet it is a relationship that has changed drastically since martial arts have come to the West. No longer is it a relationship that is given the gravity that it deserves. In the past the relationship was beneficial for both students, in exchange for the knowledge and help of senior students the Kouhai freely gave respect, and time to their Sempais, their Senseis and their Dojos. They were given the tasks of cleaning Dojos, acting as uke, caring for weapons and many other tasks that today would be considered menial and beneath a student. But being a Kouhai was never meant to demean a student, but rather to give them a chance to show their respect and thanks for the time invested in them by senior students and instructors who themselves had once been the juniors. Today in the Western World of Martial Arts this relationship is still given lip service but in far to many schools that is all. Because students pay for classes they see their instructors as people who work for them as opposed to people who are choosing to share knowledge gained through years of training. This attitude engenders a loss of respect for the seniors' skills and the time they have dedicated to their Arts. But more than that it causes a lack of loyalty to the school. The Sempai/Kouhai relationship is essential to the building of a strong and cohesive school as it creates a family system within the dojo. Students know they can count on the help of their seniors and in turn senior students and instructors know they can count on their students. This relationship is precious and should continue as it has for thousands of years for it is this relationship that allows students to walk into a school as separate people but emerge as brothers and sisters in their art.

Written by: Sensei Renee Howard

Japanese Words to Know:

Kouhai: Junior Student

Sempai: Senior Student; Teacher Assistant

Sensei: Teacher

Renshi: Learned Trainer

Shihan: Model Teacher

Kyoushi: Learned Instructor

Hanshi: Master Instructor

Soke: Grand Master