

# Martial-Arts Response to a Solid Surprise Shoulder Shove

By [Keith Pascal](#)

You are standing there holding a cracker with cheese on it, talking to another party guest. Suddenly, and I do mean without warning, someone approaches from the side and back.

Before you realize that anyone other than another happy, party guest is close by, "Blammo" -- you feel a solid shove to your shoulder. It causes you to take a couple of steps.

Now, what?

## **Martial-Arts Distance Choice**

Look, I don't know what style you practice, how old you are, how you stand, or how you react to violence. I also don't know what learned (or developed) reactions you exhibit.

I do know that when someone shoves you, or otherwise makes unfriendly contact, that you have three quick ways that you could interact with distance:

Move closer to your opponent

Distance yourself from your opponent

Remain at the same distance

In this martial-arts articles, I just want to focus on where you are going to be in relation to your enemy after the initial "surprise" contact.

Note: The reason that I set the scenario up with a "shove" was because I understand that if you are coldcocked by your opponent, you could be unconscious without any opportunity to respond with your techniques. In this case, you get a chance to respond, since you were roughly shoved but not brain-rattled.

OK, you have been shoved.

## **Counterattack Even Before the Rest of the Body Catches Up**

If you are an efficient fighter, then your hand or foot will strike out, even before your body catches up by affecting a stance. Get it? The weapon begins the action; the body follows. (This is for the more accomplished and/or progressive practitioners.)

If you are a beginner, then you'll try to block "after the fact." Oops. You have already been shoved. So, it's not a very effective response.

OK, how should you respond?

### **Approaching Infighting Range**

Remember how I said that there are three choices of movement (including non-movement)?

Number three shouldn't normally be an option. Even if you are responding with a punch before your body catches up, I am not sure you should plan on staying exactly where you are -- in relation to your attacker. In other words, if you have a split second to react or decide, don't opt for giving your enemy his or her preferred distance.

So, that leaves getting closer or distancing yourself. Both are viable options. Because of space considerations, let's talk about getting closer:

Someone at the party shoves you. The shove itself adds a little distance, but your newfound enemy rushes you again, immediately.

If you are the type who prefers infighting, then you need close proximity to be able to "do your stuff." Fortunately, with the attacker's second wave, "you" might not have to step to him or her.

His or her second charge could bring the two of you closer, almost automatically. The key is knowing how to interrupt the timing of that second attack.

Note: This is a key principle in Bruce Lee's style of Jeet Kune Do (JKD).

Also, keep in mind that, even though you are orienting on your enemy's centerline, you can step in "at an angle." (Worth considering.)

Getting closer isn't your only option, but it's a good one for those who are comfortable at a distance so close that only shin kicks and short punches would be possible.

And don't forget those elbow strikes.

Keith Pascal is the author of "How to End the Fight with One Hit": [Best Fighting Tactics](#).

Keith is the editor and author of several martial-arts ezines, including:

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