

THE READY STANCE – THE #1

By George Ryan

Law enforcement officers can often find themselves in one of a myriad of circumstances that cause them to wonder if an interaction with a suspect will become physical. The suspect may be emotional or agitated. He or she may be displaying some of the subtle pre-fight indicators that were covered in the last issue of *The Tactical Edge*.¹ When this happens, officers have only seconds to observe and process the

suspect's behavior and then decide upon the best course of action. It is imperative that officers put themselves in a position of advantage that will allow them to negate or react to a preemptive strike or attack. This is why buying time can be a law enforcement officer's best friend.

As a police officer for the past 22 years, and going back to my experience as a nightclub doorman in my

college days, I have practiced the "ready stance" as one of my most effective means of buying time and helping diffuse potentially volatile situations. Essentially, the ready stance is the way I place my hands and my body so that, if warranted, I can quickly, efficiently and physically control a suspect. It is very similar to a field interview stance (FI Stance), but with some subtle yet important differences.

The officer (right) employs the ready stance while his training partner displays pre-fight indicators.



STREET-READINESS TECHNIQUE



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First, your stance should be bladed and your posture should appear to be relaxed. However, your weight should be evenly distributed on the balls of your feet and your knees should be slightly flexed so that you are ready to react in an instant. Furthermore, you should stand or shade slightly towards the suspect's non-dominant side. Most times, you can quickly determine this by the suspect's natural stance. Look to see if the suspect rocks a little and drops his or her primary hip rearward. A suspect may even blade his or her own stance.

Second, your hands should be up in front of you and open, and your palms should be facing the suspect. Your lead hand can be slightly ahead of your rear hand. Also, your hands should be positioned at a height that enables you to have a good visual of the suspect's hands and waistband.

At this point, this may seem too simple — does adopting a specific stance really make a difference in a

potential use-of-force situation? Or does it seem too complicated — feet and knees this way, hands this way and that way? Whatever you may be thinking, I can assure you that the ready stance offers several, critical advantages:

- You control the distance between you and the suspect because your hands act as a barrier.
- Your open hands send the non-verbal message to the suspect



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that he can relax because you are not posing a threat.

- You are closer to the suspect's non-dominant hand, which is easier to control if you need to rapidly apply a joint-lock or firm-grip.
- You will have a little more distance and time to react if the suspect attacks you preemptively with his primary or rear hand.
- You are already in position to defensively block a preemptive strike as well as to go on the offensive and physically control the situation with a joint-lock or strikes, if warranted.



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Most importantly, though, the ready stance requires that you are fluid and not static. This is critical because every officer-suspect interaction is fluid. Suspects in an adrenalized state may have a very hard time processing all of

your words. Therefore, it's imperative that officers couple their words with non-verbal cues and gestures to help defuse the situation. With the ready stance, you will be talking calmly with your hands out in front of you. You will be making a "calm down" motion with your hands as you verbalize. You will be sending non-verbal cues to the suspect that you are relaxed, yet in control. Potential witnesses can see that you are trying to defuse the situation.

However, if a suspect does decide to attack, the ready stance offers several protections. You will not be too close to the suspect if verbalization fails and you must react to an attack.



The ready stance is only effective if it is practiced. Take time to practice this stance with your partners at work and training.



You will have your hands blocking the path for the most common attacks such as a punch to the face or head. You also will have your hands in a position to quickly block, brace, roll and counter the suspect's attack.

As with any other tactic, though, the ready stance is only effective if it is practiced. Take time to practice this stance with your partners at work and training. You will see that it is invaluable for managing distance and for having a physical barrier between you and your training adversary. Make sure to train diligently until your stance and dialogue look natural. Never drop your guard. Remain primed and ready to react, as you

The officer blocks a preemptive strike and prepares to go on the offensive.



would in any real-world police/suspect encounter, but always give the appearance that you are calm and trying to peacefully resolve the incident.

It is my hope that if you practice and apply the ready stance, then you will be able to exploit its positional advantages in order to control and defuse a situation and thereby avoid being preemptively attacked during a potentially volatile encounter. At the very least, it should allow you to buy some of that most precious of commodities — *time*. //

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ENDNOTE

1. "Learning the subtle pre-fight indicators: The first step in street-readiness," *The Tactical Edge*, Fall 2013, p. 64.

Photos taken at CrossFit Amundson in Santa Cruz, CA. Special thanks to Greg Amundson and Jeff Martone for their assistance.

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