

HERITAGE



SELF-DEFENSE PROGRAM STUDENT HANDBOOK

Heritage Self-Defense Student Handbook

by Robert E. Mitchell Jr.

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For more information about Heritage Self-Defense visit www.heritageartsinc.com or write to: Heritage Self-Defense, P.O. Box 1322, Glen Allen VA 23060.

About of Heritage Self-Defense

Heritage Self-Defense one of the programs offered by Heritage Arts Inc., a 501(c)(3) federally recognized non-profit educational charity providing free instruction in martial arts, fitness, outdoor skills, and spiritual development.

Heritage Self-Defense (“HSD” for short) is a practical, pragmatic American martial that is a fusion of Western fighting methods and spiritual concepts that was founded in 2009.

Its primary martial influences include, but are not limited to, Boxing, Wrestling (Catch, BJJ, folk, freestyle, etc.), Kickboxing (Savate, Sport Karate), Walking Stick Self-Defense (Vigny-Lang and Monstery methods), and Rough ‘n’ Tumble (the fighting methods, lifeways, and ethos of colonial and indigenous people of North America during the Frontier Period).

Its spiritual insights are non-dogmatic and draw on the inspiration of symbols. Well-ordered symbols, when used properly, bring people and ideas together. They unite us by pointing to what we all see and share, conveying universal ideas in a poetic way. To restate it more philosophically, a good symbol reconciles *objective* reality with *subjective* reality – it brings people together while allowing individuals to keep their own specific interpretations.

The seventeen symbols of Heritage Self-Defense are Hourglass, Quill, Rule, Star, Moon, Dragon, Wheel, Raven, Bell, Candle, Rose, Book, Compass, Hand, Staff, Grail and Sword.

Things to Remember

- Wear clothing appropriate to the weather and the activity.
- This is an outdoor martial arts class. Do not wear clothes that you are afraid to soil, rip, scuff, or stain.
- Long pants and gloves are advised if you want to avoid scraped knees and palms.
- Bring water.
- Consider seasonal environmental factors. Gloves and stocking hats in winter, towels, bug spray and sunscreen in spring and summer, etc.
- Be prepared for close human contact. Come with a clean body and trimmed fingernails.

Necessary Equipment

See Elder Mitch for assistance or shop yourself. Here’s what you’ll need:

- A spiral notebook and pen
- Fingerless MMA gloves suitable for sparring (4 oz.)
- A boil-and-bite mouthpiece
- Rigid shin guards
- Groin cup and/or breast guard

- A durable, unweighted stick 32” – 36” (depending on your height), suitable for walking stick training, made of wax wood, rattan, mulberry, or equivalent
- A wooden mock knife from 7” – 14” in length with rounded tip
- A stiff rubber mock knife 7” – 14” in length with rounded tip
- Safety glasses
- Headgear with clear face shield
- A yoga block for meditation, contemplation, and prayer

Journaling Requirement

Journaling is central to the Heritage Self-Defense process and is strictly required for all members, regardless of rank.

All participants in Heritage Self-Defense must present their journals at the end of the month for review. Don’t worry about others reading your personal entries. Nobody’s going to pry. Just open up your journal and ruffle through the pages you wrote this month. If you’re really concerned about privacy, put sticky notes over certain sections or clip specific pages together.

You are on your own recognizance. If you keep a sloppy journal, fill your journal with lies, or sit down the night before and make junk entries just to have something to present, you’re only hurting yourself.

Structure of Training Sessions

Each training sessions breaks down as follows:

5 - 10 minutes of forms
 15 minutes of skills practice
 15 minutes of sparring
 15 - 20-minute constitutional
 5 - 10 minutes of internal work
 1 minute closing oath

 60 minutes total

- *Forms* are groups of techniques, sequences of movement, simulated fights, or flow drills that are memorized and repeated in a relaxed and fluid manner as part of the learning process.
- *Skills practice* refers to techniques practiced in isolation, breakdowns of forms, drills, and so forth – basically everything that is neither forms, sparring or fitness.
- *Sparring* is fighting in a controlled manner so as to maximize preparedness for actual self-defense while minimizing injury.

- *A constitutional* is martial fitness routine. Details in the next section.
- *Internal work* will take the form of either contemplation, meditation, prayer or reading of sacred literature.

The Four Weekly Phases

In order to ensure that training time is split across all domains as equally as possible, skills practice will follow weekly phases over the course of the month:

First Week: Striking (punches, kicks, etc.)
 Second Week: Clinching (stand-up grappling)
 Third Week: Wrestling (groundwork)
 Fourth Week: Weapons (knife, stick, cane, etc.)
 Fifth Week (if applicable): General Self-Defense

The first week of a given month starts on its first Sunday and weeks counts out from there. The fourth week of the month is often a split week that starts on a Sunday and ends on a Saturday in the following month. But Several times a year the fourth week will be a full week, and there will be fifth “split week” at the end of a month. When that happens, the fifth week is devoted to General Self-Defense (Prevention, Avoidance, De-escalation, and Escape or “P.A.D.E.”).

Of course, since we train outdoors, we’ll need to adapt to the weather conditions. Nobody wants to spread out the tarps and wrestle in the pouring rain! On rainy days, or when the grass is a soaking mud pit or a sheet of ice and snow, we will have to spend extra time on skills. Obviously, we can’t spar on concrete!

Constitutionals

Physical fitness is an essential component of Heritage Self-Defense. Fitness routines known as *constitutionals* should be performed twice per week. *Always consult a physician before beginning a new exercise regimen and be advised that beginners in martial arts, and those unaccustomed to strenuous exercise, should start slowly and ease into this type of fitness.*

Don’t give in to your competitive instinct and overdo it. A little soreness is to be expected when starting a new exercise plan but going too far too soon is dangerous and discouraging.

A constitutional lasts about 15 minutes and is made up of seven, martially-relevant exercises. Start by selecting seven exercises from the list below.

Exercise Element	Target Reps/Count	Zone
Ab Punches	60 sec.	Core
Back Bridges	25	Core
Bear Walks	25 x 4 yards	Mobility
Bodybuilders	25	Whole Body
Bottom Scissors	60 sec.	Lower
Clocks	25	Whole Body
Crawls	8 x 4 yards	Mobility
Crunch 'n' punches	25	Core
Drop Duck-Unders	25	Lower
Get-ups	25	Mobility
Jackknifes	25	Core
Mountain Climbers	25	Whole Body
Neck Crunches	25 @, 100 total	Core
Pikes	25	Core
Prisoner Get-ups	25	Mobility
Push-ups, knuckle	25	Upper
Push-ups, regular	25	Upper
Push-ups, sit-out	25	Upper
Push-ups, smearing	25	Upper
Russian Squats	25	Lower
Shin Rides	25	Whole Body
Shots	25	Lower
Shoulder Rolls	25	Mobility
Shrimps	25	Core
Side Deadfalls	25	Mobility
Sit-Outs	25	Whole Body
Sprawls	25	Whole Body
Sprints	50 x 4 yards	Mobility
Squats	25	Lower
Squeezes	60 sec.	Upper

Instructions: Although there are a number of ways of performing constitucionals, the primary way they are done as a group is as follows. After selecting seven (7) exercises, a 15-minute timer is set to prevent running late. Everyone begins the first exercise and does not move to the next until the last person in the group reaches the target reps (or his/her personal max). This is “the no man left behind protocol.” Those who get to the target reps first do extra reps until the last person is done. If the 15 min. timer beeps before everyone is finished with all exercises, try to beat the clock next time. If the group finishes in under 15 minutes, the group goes back and does 20% more of each exercise.

- **If you miss a club meeting, do a constitutional at home to make sure you two (2) per week.**
- **Make a new constitutional every time.**
- **Do not do the same exercises over and over.** Each and every one of the exercises on the should be incorporated in a constitutional several times in a given month.
- **Always warm up for at least 8 minutes first.** Constitucionals should be performed at the end of a training session, after forms, technique practice, and/or sparring to guarantee a warmup of at least 8 minutes. Static stretching is not advised, especially while cold. *Older folks need longer warm-ups.*
- **No long breaks.** There are no “rounds” in self-defense. Once the constitutional starts, take as many 12-count breaks as you need to finish, but no breaks longer than a 12-count.
- **No quitting.** Modify, adapt, and overcome. Members with physical limitations or injuries should reduce rep counts and/or modify or replace certain exercises with alternates. Approximate as best you can the function and spirit of the original.
- **No man left behind.** When some go more slowly than the rest, faster members should do extra reps while the slower ones catch up. Stay with your friends until they’re done. Everyone needs to work on the same exercises, at the same time (no need to be on same “beat” however). The extremely fit are encouraged to make things harder on themselves by substituting more difficult exercises, wearing a weighted vest, etc. Mutual struggle builds bonds.
- **Never push past safe limits.** New members should be drop intensity by about 50% for the first couple of months. Stay within safe heartrate limits. Theoretical max safe heart rate in beats per minute is roughly equal to 220 minus your age in years (200 for a 20-year-old, 160 for a sixty-year-old). Force anyone showing distress to stop, rest, and take a heartrate check.
- **Cool down for 3 minutes before sitting down for internal training.** This helps alleviate blood pressure spikes which have been associated with increased soreness and more frequent injuries.

The Heritage Oath

The oath we say at the end of each session is as follows: "To North, South, East and West, to our higher powers and better selves, we ask and send our blessings; that we may train with sincerity, outside the influence of evil forces, and successfully embody the Five Virtues of Heritage Self-Defense: Wonder, Sagacity, Frugality, Indomitability and Fraternity. *Ex Gladio Scientia. Rah!*"

The Five Virtues of Heritage Self-Defense

1. *Wonder* – to approach life with a sense of excitement and awe
2. *Sagacity* – to be perceptive and wise
3. *Frugality* – to be efficient in the use of resources and effort
4. *Indomitability* – to be determined, courageous, tenacious, hopeful, and positive
5. *Fraternity/Sorority* – to be dependable and worthy of the trust of fellow members

Pursue the Five Virtues in a sincere and unified way to and you will prevent all kinds of trouble in the world, both *inside* and *outside* the self-defense crucible.

Internal Training

The last 5 – 10 minutes of each session are spent practicing one of the four spiritual disciplines outlined below. Daily home practice of these disciplines is highly recommended.

Contemplation: “Attention solely to the experience of sacredness.” Contemplation is the act of clearing away mental clutter to permit the full experience of the sacredness of being. The word's root is *templum* or temple, a place set aside for the observation of sacred rites and rituals. If you are opening or clearing your head you are practicing contemplation, which concerns the creation of space for the purposes of perception.

Meditation: “Attention to a particular subject.” Meditation has the same root as words like *medical* and *medicine*. Meditation implies correction, solution, or remedy and uses tools. In the East, these tools are often called mantras (sacred words), mandalas (sacred pictures), or mudras (sacred hand gestures). In the West, meditation tends to overlap with prayer and often employs sacred words repeated silently or aloud, singing, chanting, and icons or pictures for gazing.

Prayer: “The offering of adoration, confession, supplication, or thanksgiving to one’s Higher Power.” Prayer has the Latin root *precari*, 'to beg,' but it is much more than that. There are many forms of prayer, the primary ones being pleas for assistance and words of praise.

Sacred Reading: “Reading of sacred literature.” The Latin word for read is *lectio*, which literally means to *select* or *choose*. Calm, purposeful reading of sacred texts with an eye toward complete understanding in all four senses – the allegorical, literal, moral, and anagogical – is essential to developing a healthy spiritual life and for the cultivation of wisdom.

The Winged Hourglass, Symbol of Heritage Self-Defense

The Hourglass symbolizes the passage of time, and the wings indicate that it can fly – it can move faster and see things from a higher vantage point. This implies that classic adages like, “Time flies,” (*Tempus fugit*), “Time waits for no man,” and so forth. It says, “Time is short. Fly high and live your life with intent and purpose.”

Tip the Hourglass its sand reverses direction. *The sand flows both ways*. The Hourglass warns us that, “Everything in its extreme tends toward its opposite.” An excess of freedom leads to anarchy and the tyranny of the mob. Enforce laws in the extreme and the result is rebellion and, in the end, more lawlessness. An excess of parental guidance leads to a child being unable to self-direct; putting your love on overload leads to obsession and hatred; extreme dieting for health eventually leads to negative health effects, and so on.

The top of the Hourglass is the same as the bottom. The lower half mirrors the upper half just as each of us mirrors our higher power. Everyone has a higher power, even if he or she doesn’t realize it – creature comforts, entertainment, money, power, sex, pleasure, popularity, or reputation can all be ‘higher powers.’ The Hourglass warns us that we need to be incredibly careful about what we worship, look up to, and emulate. The Hourglass says, “Beware of false idols.”

Where the top half of the Hourglass meets the bottom is the place where the ideal meets the real, where the theoretical meets the actual, and where ultimate success is realized if the timing is right. This is the Greek concept of *Kairos*, which is the perfect or most opportune time for a proper action, like planting time or harvest time, the time for setting sail on a voyage, the time for breaking ground on a building project, the time for a wedding, etc.

Timing is everything, as the saying goes. No business can be launched if the conditions aren’t right. Fighting techniques don’t work if speed, distance, and relative position aren’t just so. And so on.

But what’s true in the world isn’t necessarily true in the realm of spirit. *Kairos* is the Greek word for *time* found in Mark 1:15 in the Greek New Testament. And since Mark was the first gospel written, these are the first recorded words attributed to Jesus: “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent, and believe in the gospel (Mark 1:15).” Something that is “at hand” is within easy reach. Thus the Hourglass says, “The perfect time to encounter God is right here and right now.”

About the Founder of Heritage Self-Defense

Robert “Mitch” Mitchell is a writer, martial arts expert, and archdeacon in the Old Catholic tradition. He has over 35 years of experience in the martial arts that began with armed and unarmed guard certifications obtained working in private security in the mid-1980s. In 1989 he earned his Taekwondo black belt and taught inner city youth and adult martial arts at the YMCA (1990-1994) and at City of Richmond Recs and Parks (2000-2005).

A graduate of Western Warrior Bootcamp (2019) and four-time graduate of Karate College (‘03, ‘05, ‘17 and 2019), Mitch is a martial arts master certified by the Combat Martial Arts Practitioners Association (2011), and a boxing, wrestling, MMA and Rough ‘n’ Tumble affiliate coach in the Mark Hatmaker Combat Sports System (2003 to present).

He is the author of several books including Martial Grit: Real Fighting Fitness on a Budget, The Calisthenics Codex, The Wildwood Workbook, and the forthcoming Heritage Self-Defense: the Complete Martial Arts Training Course, as well as many fiction books, poems, comic books, short stories, and articles.

He is currently a transitional archdeacon enrolled in Ekklesia Epignostika Seminary in pursuit of Holy Orders of the priesthood. He looks forward to his retirement years when he can step away from his accounting job and devote his life fully to the work of Christ. Anyone in the HSD family in need of emotional support or pastoral counseling are encouraged to call him at (804) 516-1224.

Those interested in participating with Mitch in worship or in other church activities are urged to reach out as well.

Mitch graduated from the University of Virginia in 1983 with a B.A. in English. He and his wife Karen are the proud parents of four children and five grandchildren.