



## Publication

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In law enforcement and security professions, the stakes of defensive tactics training are nothing less than life and death. Yet, despite the gravity of their roles, too many officers are equipped with training that overlooks key biological, physiological, and psychological realities. As spontaneous attacks and ambushes become more prevalent, the gap between what is taught and what is needed is increasingly apparent—and potentially dangerous.

To understand why current training falls short, it is essential to examine three critical concepts from psychology and neuroscience: Hick’s Law, Fitt’s Law, and the Psychological Refractory Period (PRP).

- **Hick’s Law:** This principle posits that the time it takes for a person to make a decision increases with the number and complexity of choices. In high-stress, rapidly evolving scenarios, officers who are trained with too many response options may experience delayed reaction times—potentially costing lives.
- **Fitt’s Law:** Fitt’s Law describes the relationship between the speed and accuracy of human movement. When officers are forced to execute complex motor skills under pressure, their accuracy suffers. Training that relies on fine motor skills is unlikely to be effective in real-world, high-adrenaline encounters.
- **Psychological Refractory Period (PRP):** During an ambush or surprise attack, the brain can become momentarily overloaded, unable to process multiple stimuli simultaneously. This “bottleneck” can leave officers temporarily unable to respond, particularly if their training does not account for these limitations.

Recommendations for Training Reform:

1. **Simplify Response Options:** Defensive tactics curricula should be streamlined, focusing on a few reliable techniques that can be executed under extreme stress. This reduces decision-making time and aligns with Hick’s Law.
2. **Prioritize Gross Motor Skills:** Emphasize movements that are achievable even when fine motor skills deteriorate, as predicted by Fitt’s Law.
3. **Stress Inoculation Training:** Incorporate realistic, high-pressure scenarios that simulate

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ambushes and surprise attacks, allowing officers to practice responding during the Psychological Refractory Period.

4. Policy Alignment: Update organizational policies to reflect these scientific realities, ensuring that training is not only practical but also defensible in court.