



## The Science of Takedowns, Throws & Grappling

**Author:** Martina Sprague  
**Genre:** Aikido and Other Martial Arts  
**Publisher:** Conneticut: Turtle Press, 2003  
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*Discussing universal principles rather than techniques, this comprehensive volume deals not with martial arts as a sport, but with the practicalities of having to 'fight' in the real world.*

Martina Sprague's well-written text reminds me somewhat of a school book. That's not necessarily a bad thing of course, indeed many books on similar subjects adopt a not too dissimilar approach; it just seemed more pronounced here. And that is a very good thing. At around 300 pages, and separated into numerous chapters that cover all aspects of practical engagement, the author's fighting 'style' is one geared very much toward real-world encounters, situations where there no rules, nor etiquette, and the last thing one really wants to do is engage in a physical exchange; think of the consequences. Instead, Sprague focusses on *genuine* self-defence, rightly suggesting that a large part of this is how to avoid a fight in the first place. On a practical level, she works with the universal principles of physics that affect the world around us and *are* used in all martial arts, but she manages to do this without getting bogged down in one particular style, or indeed the terminology of the 'club syllabus'. Amongst the possible scenarios discussed, the author includes situations in bars, parties, trouble in the street, or even in a back garden, where many of the techniques are demonstrated, also including suggestions on how to use objects around you (such as chairs) to assist in your defence. After all, if it's there, use it... there *are* no rules in a real fight.

In the end, this, the second book from Sprague (a multiple black-belt holder/instructor), is refreshing in that it is as much about the psychology of fighting as it is the physical aspects themselves. This, coupled with her strategy of not adhering to a specific style but instead applying their principles is a very good one overall. I suspect that many martial artists would secretly agree with her point that many of their number, particularly those practicing sports-based styles, may not actually fare as well in a real fight as they might think. This book may well fix that.

9 sausages out of 10

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