

# Tempo and Measure

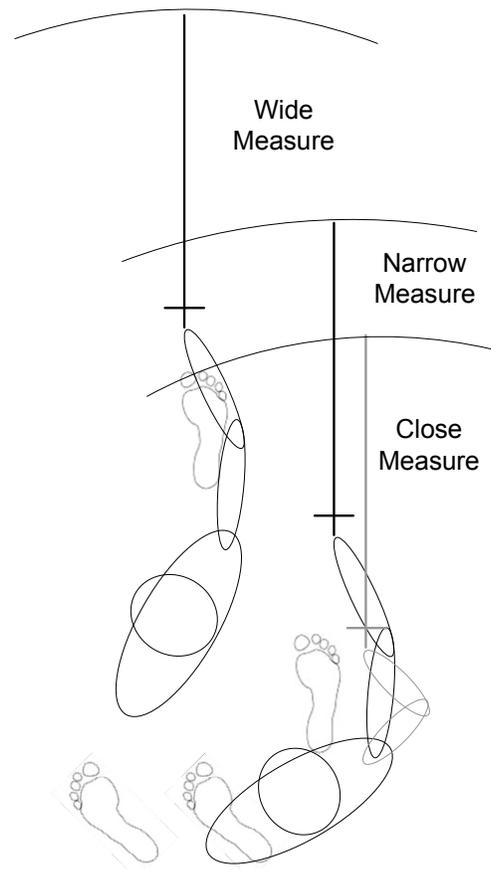
## Lecture Notes

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Measure – How away is your opponent? This varies by combinations of person, weapon, and pace. Every two people have DIFFERENT measures. Start from a guard position [Capo Ferro's "terza," di Grassi's "low ward," or a generic "en garde" will do].

- Close Measure – You are close enough to come to grips with your opponent but too close to use your sword point. [Demonstrate by setting sword aside and throwing a roundhouse punch: that arc is the close measure.]
- Narrow Measure – You can reach your opponent by moving only your arm [Demonstrate by making a wide swinging cut with your sword: within that arc is the narrow measure.]
- Wide Measure – You must take a step and extend your arm to reach your opponent [Demonstrate by taking a lunge and making a wide swinging cut with your sword: within that arc is the wide measure. Also, take a pass back, turning to look behind you and make a wide swinging cut to illustrate the extent of the wide measure for a passing foe.]
- Out of Measure – You cannot reach your opponent with a single step, you are out of range [Repeat the wide measure demonstration, \*beyond\* that arc is out of measure.]

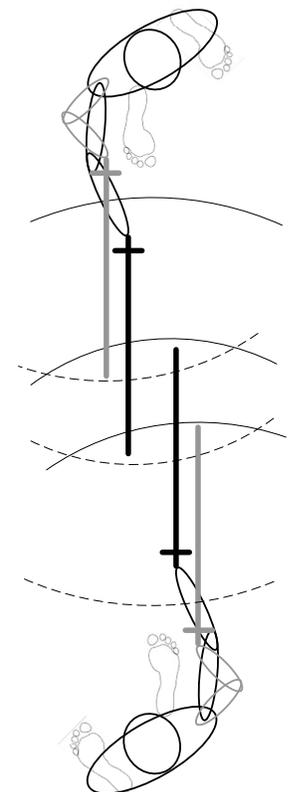


The application of these measures for DEFENSE, this is based on YOUR OPPONENT'S reach/measure described above:

- Out: Begin/reset a fight here. Perform all shtick here. Pose for photos here. Observe your opponent and seek tempos to enter the wide measure and attack from here.
- Wide: Do NOT start a fight in this measure. Do not dawdle in this measure. Do not stand unguarded or make photo op poses in this measure. Enter this measure ONLY when given a large tempo to exploit, and leave quickly once it has been exploited.
- Narrow: same as above
- Close: avoid, as SCA rules prohibit the effective techniques for this range [or learn the SCA oddity called "infighting"]. You have probably already died.

The application of these measures for OFFENCE, this is based on YOUR reach/measure described above:

- Out: Observe your opponent and seek tempos to enter the wide measure and attach from here.
- Wide: Attacks to opponents in your wide measure take time [step plus thrust] so you must have a large tempo to exploit. Look for your opponent to change guards [make a large body movement which doesn't kill you] and strike against their movement. Meet a lunge with a lunge off line. Crossing your wide measure is where most untrained opponents should die.
- Narrow: Attacks to opponents in your narrow measure ought to be quick [no stepping] and are frequently done to exploit smaller tempos [raising hand, miss/double tempo parry]. Stop thrust to the sword arm mid motion works well here. Many untrained fighters will begin the fight unguarded in this measure and ought to die here.
- Close: lacking grapples/strikes, there is little use to fighting here. You have missed two opportunities to kill your opponent on your way here.



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Tempo's are NOT as universal as Measures, but represent fundamental historical combat elements we do ANYWAY, just not as well as we should. Anyone can improve their skills through understanding of Tempo's, either by recognizing more opportunities or by reducing their own errors.

This discussion of Tempo's is based on my own reading of Capo Ferro's work, and is NOT definitive. Please feel free to correct, discuss, argue, etc. This is distilled into what I start new students learning, and is NOT by any means a complete explanation of Tempo's. This also presumes a somewhat "Italian" theory of engagement, which is largely reactive [I wait for my opponent to make a mistake, and then respond]. After some success with this, we move into \*causing\* mistakes instead of just \*waiting\* for them.

Tempo –There are at least 3 uses of the word "Tempo," we'll deal with the first two here, as they fit together.

- The Tempo's in which YOU move to respond to your opponent
- The Tempo's YOUR OPPONENT gives you, or the gaps in his timing you exploit
- Misc. references to time/speed

To begin, let's discuss the Tempo's which describe How You Move. Two of them are very common, the other two are somewhat rare.

a. Double - double beat Tempo when you defend/counterattack as two moves

This is the most common method for untrained combatants, to make one move to swat the opponent's sword away, then a separate move to hit the opponent. This is the slowest way to fence, with some combatants leaving a gap between the moves and creating a "triple Tempo." This is also the best way to learn new complex body movements one step at a time [worry about making the parry before complicating things with the pass step AND the thrust]

b. Single - single beat Tempo when you defend/counterattack as one move

This is the more efficient method, where the defense and attack are done at the same time. Many things learned as a combination of Double Tempo movements can be merged into a Single Tempo.

c. Middle - middle Tempo on attacks in the Narrow Measure

This is used to describe only THRUSTS made to an opponent who is [a] in the Narrow Measure and [b] making a "mistake" we'll discuss below. You hit the opponent in the middle of their movement.

d. Counter - counter Tempo on attacks from the Wide Measure

This is used to describe primarily LUNGES made to an opponent who is [a] in the Wide Measure and [b] making a specific "mistake" we'll discuss below. You are moving against their movement.

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These are of little use without the OTHER use of the word Tempo, the MISTAKES [Tempo's] YOUR OPPONENT gives you, or the gaps in his timing you exploit:

- a. Foot - when he lifts his foot to move in on an attack [your response is in Contra]

A raised foot, the beginning of a step, requires an ending and indicates where the opponent will be going. It is dreadfully difficult to begin a step ahead to the right and SHIFT with one foot in midair to the left. If you train to recognize this Tempo, then when the opponent begins a step, you can step off the line they attack and hit them with a lunge. This works well when the opponent begins well out of Measure and takes a step forward to the boundary of your Wide Measure. In Counter Tempo, your almost simultaneous step changes their position from safe to dangerous/fatal. I see more people die in the SCA this exact way than any other mistake. Crossing into the Wide Measure is dangerous enough because most untrained combatants don't know WHAT the Wide Measure is, let alone where it is. If you identify our Wide Measure arc [see previous post on Measures] and drill to recognize the Tempo of the Foot, you have a good chance at making this statistic worse.

- b. Parry - when he parries [use feint to make him start a parry]

When your opponent makes a Double Time response [parry then attack]. While he makes two distinct movements, you are making one that kills him. You beat your opponent's blade then thrust at him; he beats back and strike at you. That was double time on both sides. Now you beat WHILE extending the thrust, compensating for his parry; he is beating or parrying back and is hit by the thrust before beginning his. That was single vs. double for the kill.

- c. Change Guard - when he moves from one guard to another without attacking you

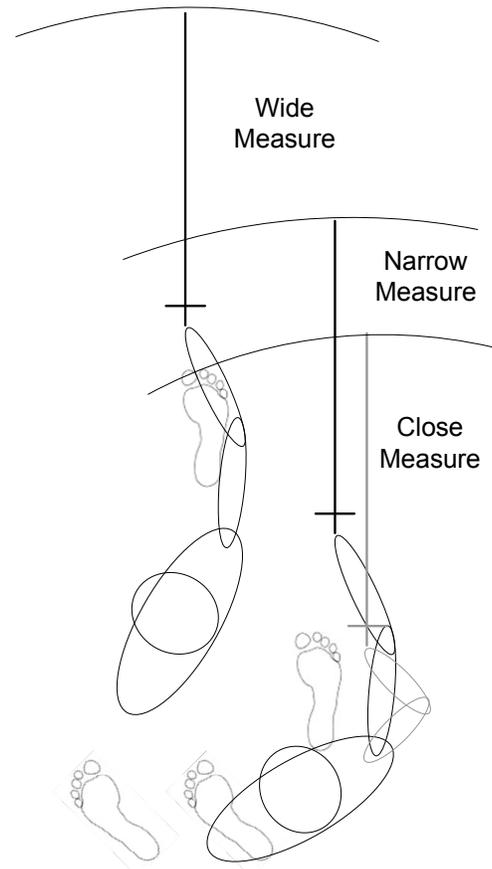
Posing within Measure should be fatal. This Tempo includes posing for photos, any complex body movement or combination of other Tempo's, and those who "read" period texts by only looking at the woodcuts. Simply, when your opponent is within Measure and is busy doing something OTHER than killing you, kill him. Pose through all dozen plus Marozzo guards if you want, but do it WELL OUT OF MEASURE.

- d. Hand - when he raises his hand [your response is in Mezzo]

Any movement of the hand where the back of the hand is leading [moving from 4<sup>th</sup> to 2<sup>nd</sup>, raising one's hand to speak in class, etc.], as it engages all the muscles to move his hand away from you, and requires switching to an entirely different nerve/muscle set to start moving towards you. While he is in the Narrow Measure and pulling his hand [and sword] away from you, thrust at him in the Middle Tempo. While he is in the Wide Measure and pulling his hand [and sword] away from you, lunge at him in the Contra Tempo.

- e. Miss - when he misses a thrust or cut and must recover to make another

When your opponent misses an attack, which is common among the untrained who Poke and Pray™, their recovery time is a gap which you must exploit. If he is in the Narrow Measure and attacks, your parry causes him to miss. Instead of just a parry, your response should have been a Single Tempo defend/counterattack. If he is in the Narrow Measure, but missed without your help [you are not engaged], then attack with a Middle Tempo thrust. If he is in the Wide Measure, then respond with a Counter Tempo lunge.



Application in training and combat:

- Recognize the Tempo's your opponent gives you, and exploit them.
- Ideally, those 5 Tempo's are the ONLY times you should strike your opponent.
- Recognize the Tempo's YOU give out, and learn to shorten them.  
Just as your opponent gives these 5 Tempo's, so do you. Learning your own Tempo's allows you to [a] reduce them or [b] give them deliberately to lure people into mistakes of their own.
- At the end of each fight, ask you opponent what Tempo's you gave them to exploit [this is a more detailed question than "How did you kill me?"] Tell your opponent what Tempo's they gave you.