



Timing is “faster” than speed.

If you are very fast with your stepping in, but you are too early or too late, it won't matter how quickly you arrive. You might even alert your opponent to your intentions and be countered. If you show up at the precise nexus of off-balancing and fitting the body, your throw will be irresistible, providing you do not do something to destroy the application of leverage and other essential completion elements.

With this in mind, it is important in your uchi-komi and subsequent randori, to think about what the “first step” of your throw is intended to accomplish. Should you consider it as the first step of the throw, or the final step of your walking? I like to think of it as the “Rendezvous Step.”

Because we do uchi-komi in a static way, in place, and because our moving uchi-komi and nage-komi is predetermined, we think of the first step as “getting in”. Consequently, when moving with an uncooperative uke in randori and shiai, we are always chasing that illusive Perfect Chance to make an entry.

On the other hand, if we train ourselves to think of that entry step as a rendezvous, we can fearlessly take that step without making the commitment to further entry. If it does not seem right, we can just keep on walking. If it is right, throw.

There are some who will argue that their first step is a large stepping around and turning step, and this cannot be done as a part of normal walking. If you watch those people doing uchi-komi, most of them will make a small preliminary step with the other foot, then take the big step. If they do not, perhaps they should, or they could be making entry without a pre-kuzushi or actual kuzushi set up. Off-balancing based only on a strong push or pull is anti-judo.

We marvel at those people who succeed with their favorite throw in spite of their opponents knowing what is coming. After all, a nage-waza is a nage-waza, and these people are not exponentially stronger or faster than their prey. So, we study... “How does Yamashita do his o-soto?” “How does Adams do his tai-otoshi?” There must be something more to it, we sense, but what is it?

- 柔道 Uchi-komi: Practice what you will do, and do what you practice.
- 柔道 Use “Rendezvous Steps” frequently, experiment, and then throw.
- 柔道 Study the videos of excellent players and look for their set-up steps.
- 柔道 Use nage-no-kata responses to strikes as an example of timing. Most preempt their response to the strike.

When people begin to compliment you on how “fast” you’ve become, you will have a reason to smile to yourself.

