



Top 5 Mistakes Instructors Make When They Might Never See Their Students Again

After teaching more than 200,000 students worldwide, I've seen even great instructors make these avoidable mistakes.

How do I know? Because I've made some of them myself.

The key is learning from them – and teaching in a way that helps people actually remember what matters most when it counts.

Chris Roberts – Founder, SAFE Violence Prevention & Self Defence
Changing & Saving Lives Since 1994



✗ Mistake #1: Teaching Like You'll See Them Next Week

Most instructors plan as if they'll have multiple sessions to teach — but what about the people who might only ever take one class, not months or years of training?

The reality is, most people are busy and just want to become safer without a huge time commitment.

If you knew they wouldn't return, would that change what you teach?
It should.

When you truly accept this, your focus shifts. You stop trying to cram everything in and start prioritizing what matters most.

Focus on a few key concepts someone will still remember six months later — when fear hits. That single mental shift can transform your teaching from technical to life-saving.

The Real Problem

Teaching as if students will come back means they may never retain what matters most.

You might only have one class to change a life — so make every word and drill count.

📅 **Up next:** Mistake #2 — Treating the Class Like a Performance



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The Performance Trap

When the goal becomes *looking good*, the message gets lost.

It's easy to slip into demo mode — sharp strikes, crisp takedowns, perfectly staged scenarios. But real self-defence isn't choreography, and students know when they're being shown, not taught.



Teaching is Connection

Teaching isn't performance; it's connection.

What truly matters is how your students feel leaving the room — not how they felt watching you move.

If you teach with empathy and focus on their needs, they'll remember far more than technique.



Up next: Mistake #3 — Forgetting That Prevention Is the Real Skill



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1

A student who avoids a violent encounter wins every single time. But many classes skip this completely, diving straight into physical responses. Train the brain before the body.

2

If someone learns how to recognize danger early — understand conflict resolution, and act on intuition — they may never need to use their physical skills.

3

When you emphasize prevention first, you're teaching true self-defence — the kind that starts before the fight ever begins.



Reality Check

If your focus is on the physical skills, you are teaching how to fight, not how to avoid a fight.



Up next: Mistake #4 — Overloading Instead of Simplifying



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One clear skill remembered beats ten forgotten techniques.

Instructors often mistake volume for value — trying to give students “their money’s worth” by packing in every drill and tactic they know.

But real retention comes from simplicity and repetition.

Ask yourself after each drill: “Will this still make sense to them when adrenaline hits?”

If not, cut it.

The best instructors don’t show everything — they teach what matters most.

Reality Check

More drills don’t equal more learning. One clear lesson remembered beats ten techniques forgotten.

📅 **Up next:** Mistake #5 — Teaching Without Connection or Reflection





✗ Mistake #5: Teaching Without Connection or Reflection

The most effective learning doesn't happen during the drill — it happens after it. Yet many instructors skip the debrief or fail to tailor the experience to the person in front of them.

A rushed or generic wrap-up misses the deeper questions students often have but are hesitant to ask. They leave thinking they “did it wrong” or not understanding *why* a tactic works.

True growth happens when you slow down, listen, and adapt — when you treat the person, not just the plan. Because connection builds confidence, and reflection locks it in.

Reality Check

Don't just teach drills — teach people. That's where the lasting lessons live.



**A free guide by Chris Roberts — Founder of SAFE
Violence Prevention & Self-Defence, teaching over
200,000 people since 1994.**

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