



# **The 5 Mistakes Instructors Make When Students May Only Train Once**

**After teaching more than 200,000 students since 1994, I've seen good instructors make the same 5 mistakes again and again.**

**These mistakes do not just confuse students. They make skills harder to remember under stress.**

**The key is learning from them – and teaching in a way people can actually remember under stress.**

**Simple to Remember. Built for Stress.**

**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 teach as if they will have multiple classes to build on.

But many students will only ever take **one class**.

They are busy.

They have families, jobs, stress, and limited time.

They still want to be safer.

That changes how you should teach.

If you knew they were never coming back, would you teach the same way?

You should focus less on how much you can cover, and more on what they are most likely to remember when fear hits.

That shift changes everything.

## The Real Problem

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

You might only have **one class** to make something stick.

So every word, drill, and decision matters.

📄 **Up next:** Mistake #2 – Treating the Class Like a Performance



# ✘ Mistake #2: Treating the Class Like a Performance



## The Performance Trap

When the goal becomes **looking good**, the lesson gets weaker.

It is easy to slip into demo mode:

sharp strikes, smooth takedowns, staged scenarios.

But **real self-defence is not choreography**.

If students leave impressed but **cannot remember what to do under stress**, the class failed.



## What Actually Matters

Good teaching is not about showing how skilled you are.

It is about giving regular people **something clear enough to remember and use**.

Students do not need a performance.

They need **simple decisions, clear priorities, and language that sticks under pressure**.

📅 **Up next:** Mistake #3 – Forgetting That Prevention Is the Real Skill



# ✘ Mistake #3: Forgetting That Prevention Is the Real Skill

1

A student who avoids a violent encounter has already done something important. But many classes skip this completely and go straight to physical responses.

2

If someone can **spot danger** earlier, manage space, use conflict skills, and **trust their intuition**, they may never need to go physical.

3

When you teach prevention first, you are teaching self-defence where it matters most: **before the fight starts**.



## Reality Check

If your main focus is physical skills, you may be teaching people how to fight more than **how to stay safe**.



**Up next:** Mistake #4 – Overloading Instead of Simplifying



# ✘ Mistake #4: Overloading Instead of Simplifying

Many instructors try to give students as much as possible in one class.

It sounds helpful.

**It often is not.**

When students are given too many drills, too many options, and too many techniques, recall drops fast.

**Real retention comes from simplicity and repetition.**

After each drill, ask yourself:

**Will this still make sense to them under stress six months from now?**

If not, cut it.

The best instructors do not show everything.

They teach what matters most.

## Reality Check

More drills do not equal more learning.

**One clear lesson remembered beats ten techniques forgotten.**

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



# ✘ Mistake #5: Teaching Without Debrief, Reflection, or Real Connection

## 1 — The lesson is not over when the drill ends.

A lot of real learning happens after the rep.

But many instructors rush past the debrief and miss what students are still confused about, still unsure of, or still afraid to trust.

## 2 — Students often leave with unspoken questions.

They may be wondering:

- Did I do that right?
- Would I remember this under stress?
- Why does this work?

If you do not slow down and help them process it, those lessons fade fast.

## 3 — Connection helps lessons stick.

When you listen, adapt, and teach the person in front of you, not just the plan, confidence grows.

Reflection locks the lesson in.

### Reality Check

Do not just teach drills — **teach people.**

That is where lasting lessons live.



# Curious to Learn More About SAFE Certification?

If this guide made sense to you, SAFE Certification may be a strong fit.

Explore the certification and see how it helps experienced or aspiring instructors teach regular people in a way that is simpler to remember and more likely to hold up under stress.

Choose the next step that fits you best:

[Book a Zoom Call](#)

Prefer email? Send your questions to [chrisroberts@safeinternational.biz](mailto:chrisroberts@safeinternational.biz)