

Protecting Our Neighbors

*D.I.Y. Community Defense
Skills Workshop Guide*



Adapted from de-arrest strategies popularized by participants in street protests against local police, this guide outlines several strategies community members can combine with rapid response, patrolling, neighborhood hubs, and other yet-to-be-conceived efforts to protect our neighbors from abduction. Ideally, people struggling together will organize a one-hour community defense strategies workshop to learn and practice these skills together. Distribute widely where such groups gather!

A combination of federal agencies, including the FBI, ATF, ICE, DHS, and CBP, has been carrying out federal immigration enforcement operations. As of late 2025, CBP has overtaken ICE as the lead agency, generalizing its cowboy tactics and replacing ICE leadership; as a result, the distinction between ICE and CBP has functionally dissolved in street scenarios. CBP and ICE agents, many of them recent recruits pursuing the \$50k sign-on bonus, have very little training of any kind and almost no training in crowd control tactics. **They are undisciplined, erratic, ideologically motivated, likely to break procedure, and easily overwhelmed by crowds — especially if a crowd can create distance between them and their cars.** This is in stark contrast to local police, who are trained extensively in crowd control, familiar with procedure, ideologically heterogeneous, and largely risk-averse. Our strategies for dealing with these agencies, therefore, must be different.

Immigration operations have often been conducted by caravans of four to eight officers, with two in each vehicle. Their M.O. is to get in and out quickly, visiting the homes and workplaces of immigrants or snatching random people they racially profile off the street. They also tend to repeatedly target particular hotspots, such as Home Depot locations, big-box stores, and other day laborer hiring corners, where they know they can reliably find people and abduct them in untargeted “sweeps.”

Organizers and participants involved in community defense projects can adapt their approaches to both the specific dangers and vulnerabilities of CBP, as explained here. With the skills outlined in this zine, participants can experiment and practice tactical thinking, real-time risk assessment, and collaboration in teams with diverse tactics and techniques.

If practicing these skills in a workshop, this is what you'll need:

- At least two facilitators. They will verbally share the information in this zine and physically demonstrate the maneuvers to the group before everyone else pairs off to practice. It can be helpful to have more than two facilitators on deck, who opt in to play agents or targets as necessary, in case other participants don't feel comfortable.
- A whistle, megaphone, or other loud object
- A stopwatch
- A large object, a table, chairs, cones, other movable furniture, or painter's tape
- Four reflective vests or hats of the same color

1. Swarm

The purpose of this practice is to demonstrate how disorienting it can be for an agent if people are surrounding them and shouting at them, even if the people never actually touch the agents or engage in more active de-arrest techniques. Facilitators should introduce swarm at the top of the training and emphasize it as the primary tactic that has proven effective. Practicing swarm in small groups should not be skipped! While the other de-arrest maneuvers to come are exciting for training participants to learn, Swarm is the foundation upon which it will all come together.

Break into groups of four, where people take the following roles:

- One agent
- One target
- Two community responders

As the agent approaches the target, the responders should try to get in the way without touching them by:

- Shouting at the agent
- Creating visual and auditory distractions
- Surrounding the agent from different angles, so that they cannot keep both responders and the target in their field of vision at the same time

Generally, the responders practice creating chaos and encroaching on the agent's space without making physical contact. **Even absent other techniques, swarming creates a chaotic and disorienting experience that makes it more likely for the agents to flee**, and builds participants' comfort in engaging in different types of intervention to try to stop a kidnapping, rather than simply keeping at a distance and documenting. For many, this could be the first time they've experienced shouting at another person or assertively taking up space. Facilitators should communicate that swarming in all forms is brave, useful, and necessary.



2. Gable Grip

The second fundamental technique to cover is the “Gable grip.” It can be an effective tool in situations where we might want to keep ourselves or our comrades out of law enforcement’s hands. In encounters like this, linking our own hands together often feels organic. However, the grip that comes naturally, interlacing our fingers together with our thumbs over one another, leaves us in a weak and vulnerable position: done right, it’s easier to pull apart, and, if done improperly, you may end up with one or more broken fingers.

Instead, try this:

1. Place your palms together. Do not interlace your fingers; keep your hands mirrored.
2. Rotate both hands 45 degrees opposite each other. Glue your thumbs to your index fingers!
3. Bring the fingers of each hand over and lock them onto the back of the other hand, forming the grip. One thumb should be under the other hand’s fingers, and the other thumb should be on the outside, facing towards your body.

This grip leverages more of your muscles than just those in your hands and fingers, making it stronger and harder to pull apart, and it reduces the risk of broken fingers. **It’s also easy to teach, and fundamental to many other techniques in community defense tactics!**



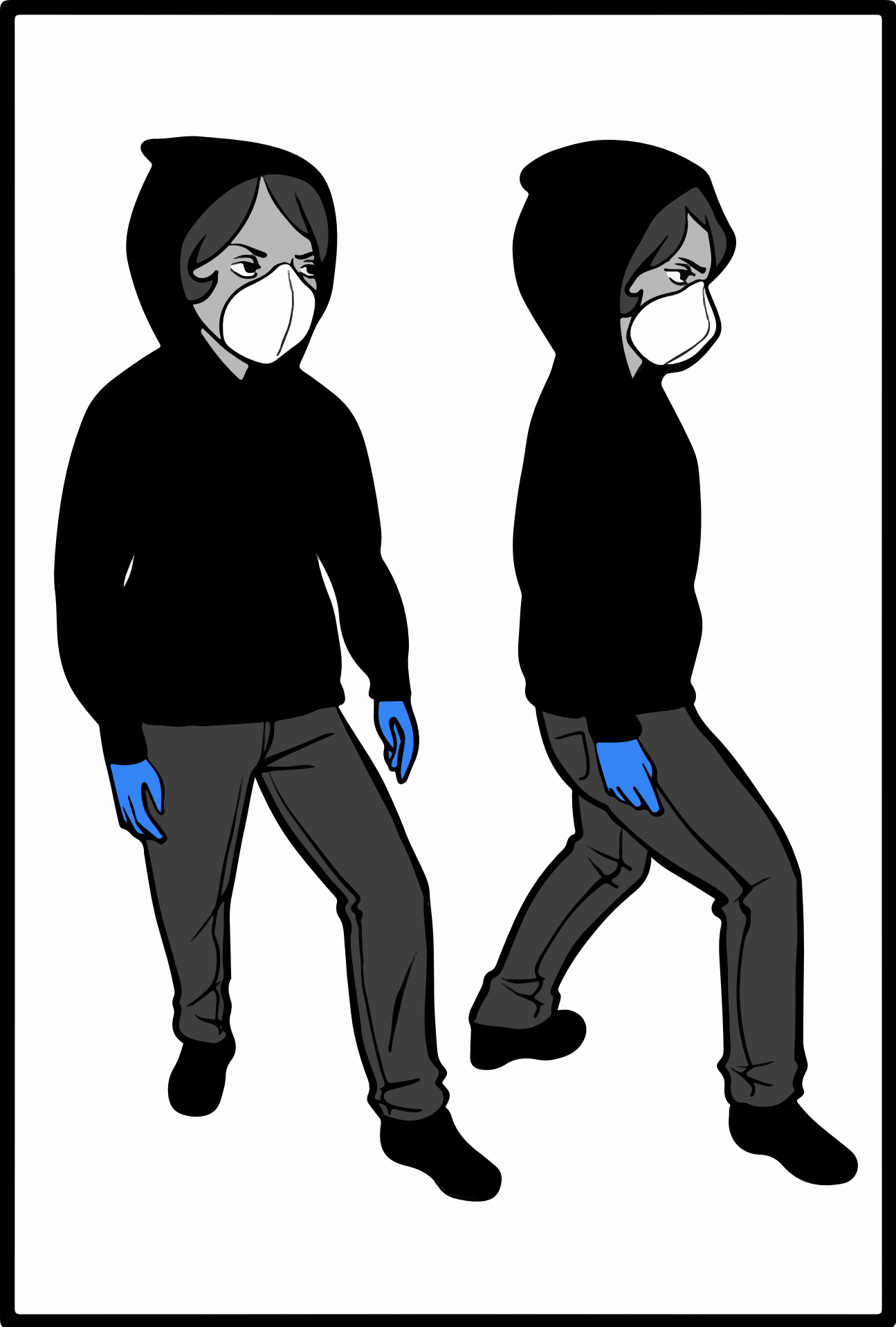
3. Stance and Bracing

Your stance is the most fundamental technique; everything else depends on it. In daily life, most of us assume a neutral stance: keeping our legs straight and alternating between hyperextending and slightly bending our knees. In a society built around standing for prolonged periods, this saves us energy; however, it does not brace us, and leaves us very vulnerable to pushing or pulling. Because most of us do not realize this, it helps to demonstrate this physically.



Instead of standing straight, try this:

1. To enhance stability, place your legs shoulder-width apart to distribute your weight.
2. Put one leg forward (whichever is opposite your dominant hand), and soften your knees.
3. Drop your weight between your feet. Keep it on the balls of your feet!
4. Rotate your back foot out approximately 30 degrees.



With a lower and more balanced center of gravity, this stance should increase your stability and put you in a state of active readiness, more mobile and ready to respond to sudden movements. A physical demonstration is helpful to compare this stance with the earlier upright stance; it should be harder to push or pull the person in a proper stance.

This is also the stance used when bracing with shields, should that prove useful. However, it is worth remembering that in street situations, especially with agents as erratic and inexperienced with chaos as this, fluidity is key. In these situations, committing yourself to a defensive position is a last-resort tactic; creating commotion and staying mobile is the first!

In this stance, you can also brace or be braced by another person. Bracing is best practiced against light resistance; assuming the stance described above, have participants partner up into groups of three to four and practice applying pressure against one another. The goal is to minimize the distance between the two partners who are braced, and for the person in the back to support the one in front. The person in the back should put their arms under their partner's, with their hands in front of their partner's chest, and do a Gable grip. Partners who are bracing should mirror their stances. The non-braced partners should pull on the first braced person's arms, attempting to pull the braced partners apart. Start with unidirectional pressure and gradually move towards more erratic movement, moving back and forth, while remaining braced.

Note: There are times when it may become unwise to remain braced; make sure you are attentive to what the other person wants. If they want to get out, let them!



4. Human Chain

In some circumstances, it may be useful to form a human chain or blockade line to block law enforcement, whether that's protecting the entrances or exits of a building that agents are trying to enter, preventing agents from reaching a person they are targeting, or blocking a vehicle — although note that ICE/CBP are generally much more likely to keep driving and run people over compared to cops. While a human chain with bracing offers some protection against being grabbed and can get in the way of agents, it does not, of course, prevent people from being hit by less lethal munitions or other weapons; in action settings, it could also be combined with other defenses, such as shields or umbrellas at the front to protect from munitions.



The human chain combines stance, grip, and bracing. Try it:

1. Form two rows.
2. The first row of people link arms at their elbows, Gable gripping their own hands. Keep the stance discussed previously.
3. The second row braces the first row of people. Match your legs to the person in front of you that you are bracing; minimize the distance between the two of you.

Trainers and/or other participants can pretend to be law enforcement and attempt to pull someone from the human chain or push through. Test out how much of a difference it makes to have both the human chain row and the row bracing them. Be aware of the increased vulnerability of people on the edges of the human chain.

Note: People sometimes default to forming a human chain in circumstances where it does not make sense, like in situations where the line actually blocks people from being mobile, trapping them between the line and law enforcement. Be aware of why you are forming a blockade line, where the line is relative to other people, and what functions it serves!

5. Practice Scenarios

In these scenarios, people can practice the skills introduced here in concert with all the typical rapid-response protocols (filming, recording information for hotlines and RR, providing KYR information, writing down the target's information to contact their loved ones). Assign people to the following roles:

- **One conductor:** this person keeps time and determines when the scenario can move forward to the next phase. They have a whistle, sound system, or other large object.
- **Four agents:** these people are ideally large and strong. Give them all matching vests or hats. Optionally, give them squirt guns or other toy weapons to sell the look.
- **One kidnapping target:** this is the community member who's the target of arrest.
- **Two community responders:** these people are the first on the scene and must attempt to gather more people, provide support to the target, and assess ongoing risk.
- **Everyone else:** responding community members, who will be phased in gradually.
- **For scenario 2:** bystanders on their phones. Assign 1/3 of the community members the original role of being on the sidelines, filming. The other responding community members must figure out how to convince these people to stop filming and participate.

Scenario 1

Begin with all agents, one target, and two responders. There should be something indicating the agent's vehicle(s). You may also decide to indicate a business or home — get creative and adapt this scenario to your locale! All other responders line up and wait for the signal to join.

Each time the conductor signals, one more responder joins. With the first two people likely covering the tasks of getting the person's information and filming, new people should take on other roles, like getting in the way, distracting the agent, getting between the agents and their car, shouting at the agent, or trying to draw others in. Strategies can adapt as more people join.

The agents' goal is to move the target(s) to the car. The scenario ends when the crowd de-arrests the person or when agents successfully get the target(s) into the car and leave.

Participants will likely be excited to practice their new moves — this is great! However, facilitators should emphasize that in actual encounters, agents will likely be violent, less-restrained, use less-lethal munitions, and possibly brandish firearms. Focus on practicing their communication skills and ongoing risk assessments based on the crowd size and composition.

Facilitators may opt for a rule that responders cannot make physical contact with an agent until all participants are in play, which the conductor will signal with their noise maker.



Scenario 2

This time, several people are assigned to play the role of responders who think they should only film; they will need to be convinced to take a more active intervention. Each person in this role should choose a reason they will not intervene, and the other responding community members will need to convince them to put down the phone and start acting.

After each scenario, debrief on how things went.

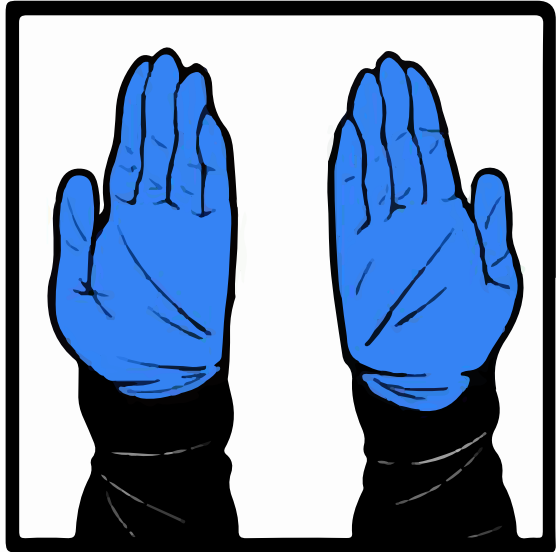
Takeaways

- **It is much more difficult to stop a kidnapping once agents have gotten a person into their vehicle. Success is more likely when people cause chaos for the agents from the start.** This also makes it more difficult for agents to target additional people.
- Agents tend to focus either on specific targets or groups, which means that, unlike police, they are not quick to shift focus to responders and often remain focused on their original target. **This means responders need to work extra hard to disorient, tire, and demoralize them.**
- Even low-level types of intervention substantially expand the possibilities of stopping a kidnapping. People take action to try to stop kidnappings all the time! But many trainings on rapid response actively train people out of their natural responses and forms of resistance they engage in every day! **Get comfortable with putting away your phone and stepping in.**

You can find this zine online at
<https://crimethinc.com/StopICETactics>



**Abolish
ICE!**



**Be
Sand,
Find a
Gear!**

