

誠道塾

K A R A T E



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Technique & Spirit



TUTTLE

# KARATE

## TECHNIQUE AND SPIRIT



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TADASHI NAKAMURA

Photographs by TOM GRILL



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This book is respectfully dedicated to  
My Parents

# FOREWORD

When I think of Shihan Nakamura, I can't help but recall my first impression: I saw him at Doshinji Monastery in upstate New York and I noticed how gentle he was. It might sound a little strange to say that a person like him, well-accomplished in the martial arts, has a gentle personality. But, despite the extremely difficult and demanding discipline one goes through, an accomplished martial arts practitioner still shows distinct characteristics of tenderness. For me the pleasure was recognizing his real strength and power behind such flexible qualities. It reminded me of *nyunan shin*, "gentle, flexible mind." This word, *nyunan*, is found in the Lotus Sutra, which reads "with straightforward and yet gentle and flexible mind, wholeheartedly wish to see the Buddha at the risk of one's own life." I have no hesitation in saying that Shihan Nakamura is the ideal type: he appears to be gentle and yet there is dynamic strength inside.

He writes, "there is no 'graduation day' from the dojo, the place of enlightenment, and so there isn't the anxiety of racing against a deadline of any kind." Here I see his wonderful insight and understanding. It is not only the general principle of any well-refined way such as the ways of tea ceremony, flower arrangement, calligraphy, as well as of the martial arts kendo, judo, aikido, kyudo and karate, but also it is the basic principle of Zen that constant, unceasing practice is essential to the realization of life in each moment. We have no day of graduation but the continuation of renewed life.

Let's listen further to what he says. "Karate-do's essence, however, is totally removed from the notion of winners and losers, trophies and prizes—the students' real opponent is the self." I see a certain parallel in expression to the Zen Master Dogen, founder of the Soto Zen school in Japan. He writes, "To study the enlightened way is to study the self. To study the self is to forget the self. To forget the self is to be enlightened by myriads of dharmas. And to be enlightened by myriads of dharmas is to free one's body and mind as well as that of others. There is traceless enlightenment; allow this traceless enlightenment to continue forever."

The word "karate" itself has a very interesting and yet profound implication. It means "empty hand." We tend to want to grab something, but hold onto it. In a way, it is nice to hold something, but at the same time it obviously restricts the use of the hand. We know that being empty-handed we can use the hand any way we want. But how and how much do we appreciate such freedom and the potential of what the empty hand can do? Karate-do, as the way of empty-handedness, symbolizes the way of freedom and total liberation, not only of oneself but also as the key to establishing a harmonious life both internally and externally.

We are living in an environment where the culture has developed into an extremely mechanized, divided and automated society. This tendency might develop further, but at the same time we hear more and more warnings against such tendencies. I hope those who are interested in practicing karate-do will find harmonious, well-balanced life through the continuous practice of the wisdom and physical discipline of empty hand.

Hakuyu Taizan Maezumi, Roshi

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*OSU!*

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# INTRODUCTION

Karate is more popular now than ever before in its history. Because of the movies, television and magazines, karate is widely perceived as a purely physical art, with spinning kicks and “karate chops.” Karate has also become competitive on the amateur and professional levels, with individual promoters and organizations striving to control this fast-growing sport. Karate certainly develops strength, stamina and physical well-being, which are all desirable objectives. However, this is not the heart of *karate-do*.

Karate is a way of life, a way of being. I have committed over 30 years of my life to the study, practice and teaching of the martial arts. I am convinced that karate has much to offer modern men, women and children, as we move forward into the twenty-first century. My purpose in writing this book is to show what I feel is the true essence, the kernel of true karate-do: the training of body, mind and spirit together in order to realize the fullness of human potential.

Since the origins of karate are intimately intertwined with Zen, I have included one chapter on the history and philosophy of karate and Zen. I hope that this will be of interest to all martial arts students, as well as to students of Oriental thought and culture. Understanding the roots of karate can help to make a student’s practice more meaningful.

Since the formalities and etiquette of karate have been largely forgotten in current practice, I have chosen to emphasize these in this book. Formality and ritual courtesy are not important in and of themselves. Rather, through repetition and practice, they help to cultivate a sense of self-awareness and a sensitivity to the feelings of others. These are the marks of a truly civilized person, a true *karate-ka*.

The technical chapters of the book explain in detail the basic physical aspects of karate: warming up, stretching, diet, training principles, stances, basic blocks, kicks and punches. The chapter on *kata* and weapons practice include material for advanced students. Whatever style of martial art you the reader, may study, I hope that this instructional material will help to refine and improve your physical practice.

The way of karate must be experienced by each individual in his or her own unique way. In this I have used the photos along with the text to convey a feeling for karate-do in the setting of daily life. Karate-do is not a sport. There is no competition with others. The real competition is with the self.

Karate-do, like life, which it mirrors, is a struggle: a struggle with our own weakness, with our egos and our selfishness, with our narrow-mindedness and prejudices. Growth in the way of karate come through unceasing, repetitive daily practice of the basics. This is called *ren ma* (constant polishing). Modern society frowns on repetition as being stifling and boring. The discipline of single-minded repetition is at the heart of karate-do. Through it, we can quiet the inner dialogue between the ego and the intellect, and we can find true freedom. There are no shortcuts to anything of lasting value. Karate-do aims at the highest perfection of the individual in the physical, spiritual and mental dimensions.

The last chapter contains a selection of short lectures that I have delivered to my students on a weekly basis over the years. The lectures deal with the simple, basic truths that form the moral

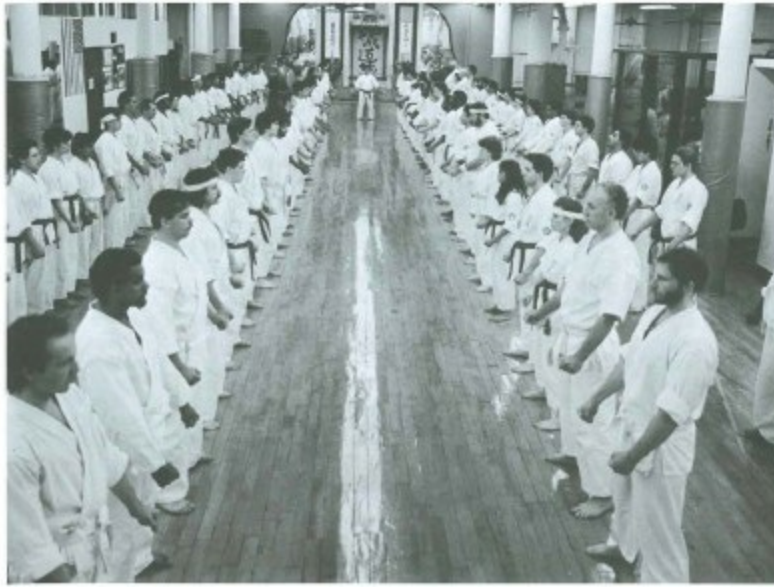
foundation of true karate-do. This moral and ethical foundation is also something that has been ignored. A true karate-ka is a person who takes his or her training in the dojo and applies it in the outside world, using the highest moral standards. Thus the karate-ka strives to be the best student, worker, husband, wife, parent or child possible. I offer these lectures to you, the reader, in the sincere hope that you may find some value in them.

I formed the World Seido Karate Organization in 1976 because I felt strongly that if karate was to survive into the twenty-first century, it must first rediscover its fullness and true essence.

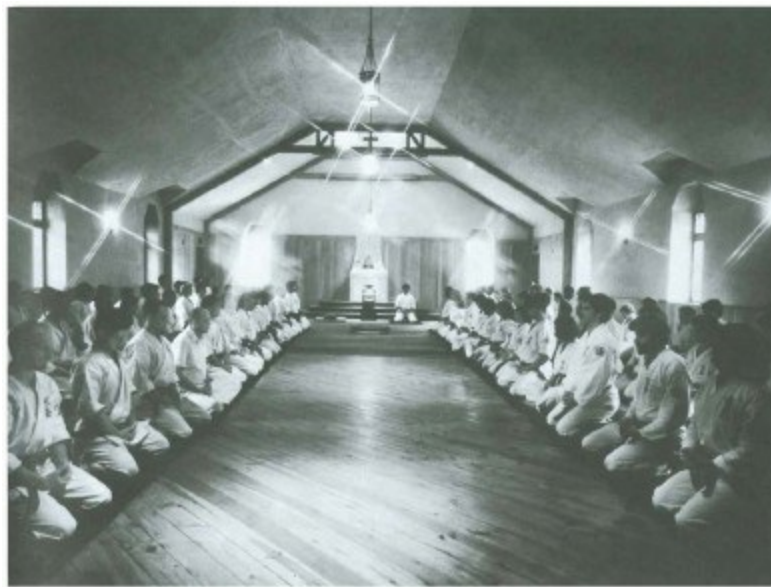
In Seido, I emphasize strict discipline, respect and courtesy, and sincere practice, along with hard physical training. While each student trains with a common body of technical material, it is my belief that the individuality and uniqueness of each student must be encouraged and respected. Though individual development is emphasized, in Seido karate I want all students to train with a feeling of “togetherness” rather than isolated individualism. A sense of togetherness and belonging is one of the vitally important things missing in angst-ridden, modern society. I value togetherness very highly, and I hope that the pictures convey this feeling to you.

I hope that you will enjoy reading, studying and looking through this book. I offer it to all readers with gratitude for my experience in karate-do and for the opportunity to share what I have learned with you.

# KARATE WAY OF LIFE



Opening a class in the dojo.



Seido students training at zendo.

At the Seido dojo, students come together to train the body and the mind. The atmosphere is formal and respectful at all times, which requires concentration and discipline. The physical training is hard, but closely supervised. At every class, the idea is to give one's absolute best physical and mental effort. Little by little, the student inexorably improves and can then unlock his or her true potential.

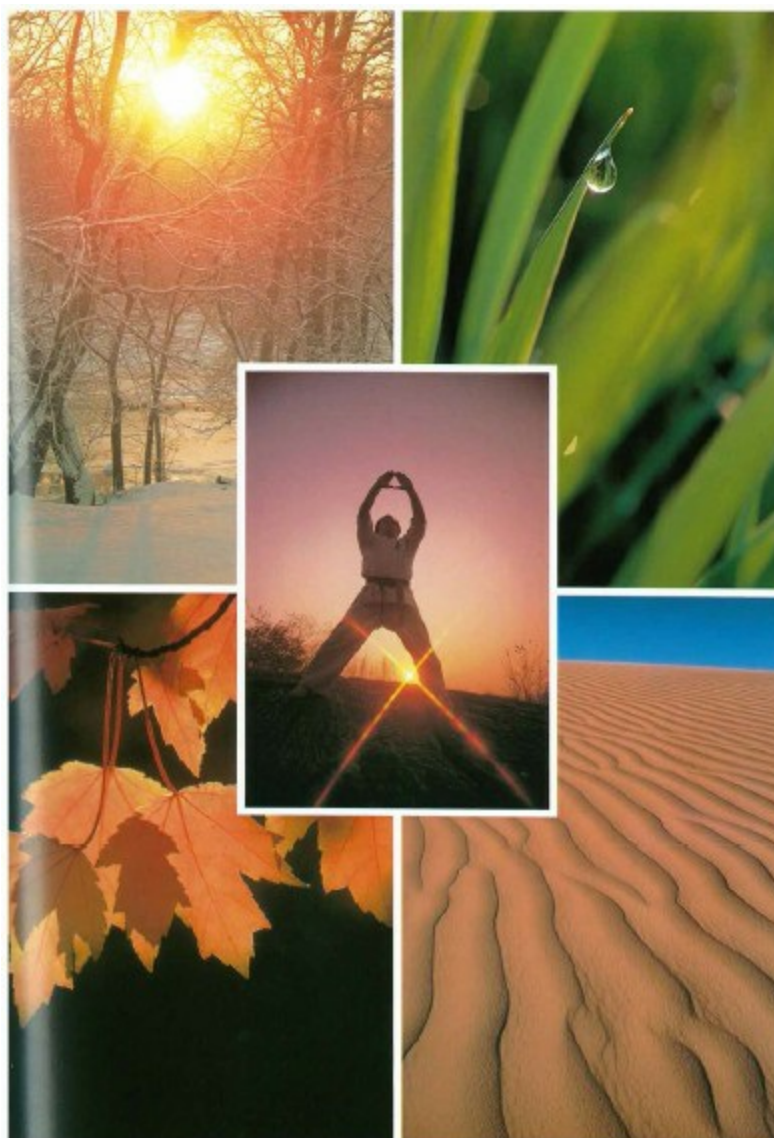
At the zendo, Seido students come together to do one thing with total concentration: that is, to sit. Again, the atmosphere is serious and purposeful. Physically, the student must master a strong seated posture and the proper breathing. At the zendo, as at the dojo, the purpose of training is to go deep inside the self and to unlock one's higher nature.

Karate is a martial art, with its own unique history, philosophy and set of techniques. Karate can be practiced in the dojo, or, as the photos demonstrate, in the outdoors. It can be practiced in the hot sun or in the deep snow. Each season gives its own flavor to karate training, and each season imposes its

own challenges to our physical and mental abilities.

Karate is also a way of life, a way of being. A karate-ka deals fully with the present moment, being totally absorbed in one action only. A true karate-ka seeks balance and harmony in his or her life; the karate-ka develops a strong body and spirit so as to better serve others.

The principles and values of karate, such as patience, concentration, respect and courtesy, are completely transferable and universally applicable to our daily affairs in business and at home.



静

Sei



*Sei* has several meanings. It can mean “calm” or “silent.” Modern life emphasizes endless activity. The constant pressure to be “doing something” creates fatigue and stress. Calm, silent periods of “active inactivity” help to create a harmony in our lives. Meditation puts our activity into proper perspective and helps us to make it more enriched.

動

Do



Although *do* can mean “way,” it also conveys the idea of activity and energy. Karate practice is full of energetic, active movement. So, too, are our daily lives. Calm periods of meditation help to make our activity more focused and more meaningful. Calmness and energetic activity must be balanced and in harmony. To emphasize either one or the other is not correct. In Seido we strive to find the right



individual balance.



Karate can be practiced in the outdoors, with nature. Meditation in a calm forest (left), and basic practice (above).





### **Beginner's Mind**

*"In the beginner's mind there are many possibilities. In the expert's mind, there are very few."*

*Shunryo Suzuki*

*Sho Shin*, or beginner's mind, is something which is a key to karate and, indeed, to living. A beginner's mind, like that of a child, is open and trusting. Knowledge can be fully absorbed into the consciousness and becomes part of our own understanding. When we gain a little knowledge about someone or something, then the mind puts up barriers; it forms opinions, preconceptions, and judgments, which inhibit true knowledge.

In Seido karate, we wear plain white cotton uniforms, with no personal decoration or adornment of any kind. White is symbolic of the beginner's mind. It is pure, simple, and empty. It reminds us to always be ready to discover and to learn.

The beginner's mind is something which we hope to meet along the Way. We cannot fix on the beginner's mind as an object of our search, however, for,

*"When one first seeks the truth, one separates oneself far from its environs. When one has already correctly transmitted the truth to oneself, one is one's original self at that moment."* Genjokoan

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# FOUNDATIONS OF KARATE

## Historical Background

### Origins in China

Bodhidharma, whom the Japanese call Daruma, was an Indian patriarch, the twenty-eighth in the line of succession from Shakyamuni Buddha, the founder of Buddhism. Bodhidharma left India for China, arriving there in 520 A.D., and he established himself at Shaolin Monastery, which had been founded by the Indian monk Batuo some three decades earlier. Shaolin Monastery is nestled on the barren slopes of Song Mountain in the Henan Province of central China.

Bodhidharma left India in order to plant Buddhism in the new soil of Chinese culture. In India, Buddhism had evolved into a complex philosophical system, and the core of its practice was eroding. Bodhidharma sat in silent meditation (zazen) in a cave on Song Mountain for nine years. Through this solitary, ascetic practice, he reached enlightenment. However, he did not feel that the training of the body was to be neglected. While doing zazen, he practiced a series of physical movements, both for exercise and for defense against wild animals.

Bodhidharma passed on his physical training techniques to the monks at Shaolin, who integrated them into their spiritual training. These techniques were also used to defend the monastery against bandits who roamed the desolate Chinese countryside. As word spread about the effective selfdefense techniques used by the monks, it was inevitable that the monastery would be drawn into local politics. At the peak of Shaolin's fortunes, during the T'ang Dynasty some 13 centuries ago, the monastery had several hundred fighting monks and a thousand lay residents who tilled several thousand acres of communal farm land that had come under the monastery's control. Shaolin's fortunes rose and fell during the struggles among various Chinese warlords, reaching the low point in 1928, when the monastery was burned to the ground. The techniques that Bodhidharma had developed were formalized into an indigenous martial art called *Wushu*. This art has withered over the years, being replaced by *kempo*, or "temple boxing." After 1928, the practice of the martial arts was banned, as part of the effort to destroy the temple's power and influence.

The martial arts were born in China out of Bodhidharma's search for spiritual enlightenment. It was not long, however, before the secular world became interested in them for very non-spiritual reasons. The martial arts spread beyond the monastery walls, and they became intimately involved with the world of courtly politics and economics.



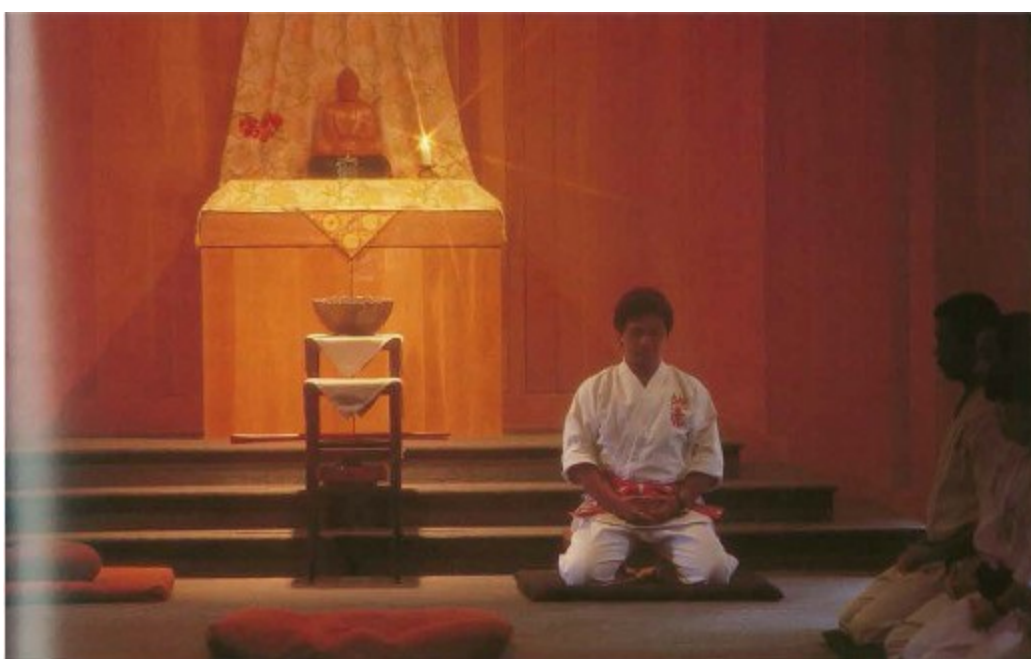
The very practical nature of Chinese culture and thought had revived the Buddhism that Bodhidharma brought from India. Buddhism lost the unworldly, ascetic bent it developed in India. In China, it was practiced widely in temples, which were intimately involved in local activity; Buddhism became perhaps too worldly, and again the core of the practice was being lost. It was necessary that the seed be carried to fresh ground. This was to be Japan.

### **The Middle Way Comes To Japan**

Buddhism arrived in Japan in the middle of the sixth century from Korea. At that time, there was tremendous rivalry among the various clans competing for the favor of the Japanese Emperor. The Soga clan championed the cause of Buddhism, and it successfully influenced the royal family. Toward the end of the sixth century, Prince Shotoku Taishi, an intellectual and philosopher, threw his support to Buddhism. He became a prominent Buddhist scholar, writing commentaries on the sutras, or scriptures.







In the early part of the seventh century, the T'ang Dynasty (618-906) began its ascendancy in China. Remember that Shaolin's influence was at its height under the T'angs. Japanese culture and administration patterned themselves after the T'ang Dynasty. The city of Nara, for example, the imperial city of Japan, was built on the model of Ch'ang-an in China.

On the political front in Japan, as the clans struggled for influence with the Emperor, his own real power started waning. The Emperor eventually became a figurehead, with the Fujiwara family becoming the real civil power in Japan. With the Emperor weakened and no central system of taxation or administration, Japan fell into an extended feudal period. The Fujiwaras, meanwhile, divided into warring factions, each one allying itself with a military house for support and protection. Eventually, the military class wrested power from the dominant families, and, in 1192, Yoritomo was made the first Shogun, or "Generalissimo."

Buddhism had been planted firmly in the Japanese soil under the patronage of Prince Shotoku Taishi. In Japan, however, it was radically transformed into something unique, namely, Zen. Dogen, a Japanese Buddhist monk, went to China to study and learn first-hand the deeper teachings of Buddhism. In China, he went from temple to temple, inquiring and observing the practice. He was unsatisfied with what he saw and heard, and he decided to go back home to Japan. Before returning, he stopped at a temple and observed a very old monk kneeling on the ground, drying mushrooms in the sun.

Dogen was surprised that an old man, a senior monk of the temple, was doing the labor of the most junior monks.

*"Why are you working in the hot sun doing the job of your younger subordinates when you are a senior monk of the temple?" asked Dogen.*

*"If I do not do this, if I do not work here and now, who could understand? I am not you, I am not others. Others are not me. So others cannot have the experience. I must dry these mushrooms here and now, today, at this moment. Now, go away so I may work!"*

Dogen was startled and had the experience of enlightenment (*satori*). He spent a year in the temple, studying with the old monk's teacher. Dogen received the *kesa* of transmission from the Master and went home to Japan to introduce his practice of Zen to Japan.

In China and India, Buddhist practice came to be secondary to philosophical systems or to ethical and political norms. Dogen, as a result of his experience, and continuing in the line of succession from Shakyamuni Buddha, founded Zen based on two basic principles:

- Direct, personal experience.
- Practice of *zazen* (seated meditation).

What Dogen did was to strip away all the philosophical, intellectual and external superstructures of Buddhism that had been destroying the core, namely, the practice. The practice, that is *zazen*, now became the **only thing**. *Everything else was secondary*.

The quiet, spare simplicity of Zen appealed greatly to many elements in the Japanese character, and it quickly took root and interacted in many profound ways with Japanese history and culture. Zen became a way for the warrior, the aristocrat and the scholar. It stressed, among other things, a unity with nature. The Zen influence led to a very prolific period in Japanese landscape painting. No aspect of Japanese art and culture escaped the Zen influence. The most striking example, which remains today, is the Dai Butsu, the huge statue of Amida at Kamakura.

During the feudal period in Japan, the samurai, or warrior class, rose to positions of great influence and respect. Particularly during the Kamakura period in the thirteenth century, the samurai absorbed much from Zen. They, in turn, imbued Zen with much of their stoic attitude. The samurai reached their peak of power and influence in the Tokugawa period of the seventeenth century. In the hierarchy of social standing of that time, warriors were paramount, followed by peasants, artisans and, finally, merchants or traders. Under Tokugawa Ieyasu, the samurai cultivated intellect as well as physical skill and power in swordsmanship. The samurai combined *kendo* (way of the sword) with the *butsudo* (way of the Buddha) of Dogen; these two came into one, becoming *bushido* (way of the warrior). The samurai value system, incorporating Zen and a fighting spirit, is the foundation of karate's value system.

We have seen so far that the precursors of the martial arts came not from a martial tradition, but from a monk's quest for spiritual perfection. The Buddhist tradition went from India to China and to Japan, via Korea; along the way it was transformed, becoming Zen in the ground of Japanese culture. Along this way, the physical techniques and exercises of Bodhidharma were transformed also. The world looked on these powerful and effective techniques as useful and desirable, apart from any spiritual training. The initial and fundamental unity of Zen and the martial arts came to be broken, as it is in the twentieth century. In the samurai class, however, the Zen and martial art traditions were unified into a single way of being.

### Developments in Okinawa

Parallel to these developments in Japan, martial arts techniques were being developed, for extremely practical reasons, in the Ryukyu Islands, on Okinawa. The islanders, having been forbidden to carry weapons by the ruling Japanese, developed self-defense techniques which they practiced in secret. These became known as *Okinawa-te* (hand techniques of Okinawa). In 1722, Sakugawa, who had studied *kempo* and stick-fighting techniques in China, systematized and developed the indigenous techniques to the point where the art became known as *karate-no-Sakugawa* (Chinese hand techniques of Sakugawa). This was the first use of the word "karate."

In 1879, the Okinawa Islands were annexed by Japan. In 1916, a group of Okinawan masters, led by the renowned Gichin Funakoshi, gave the first official public demonstration of karate outside of Okinawa, in Kyoto, Japan. Master Funakoshi, an artist and philosopher, changed the character for



*kara* from one meaning “Chinese,” to one which means “empty.” Karate then came to mean “empty hand.” This very significant change reflected his personal feeling for the deeper meaning of the art.

### **Karate: Path to the Present**

Karate and Zen were inseparable elements of Bodhidharma’s search for spiritual perfection. The two were one, hence the historical basis for the old saying, “Ken Zen Ichi Nyo!” As the spirituality of the monastery mingled with the marketplace and the political arena, it was perhaps inevitable that the techniques be separated from the core of spiritual training and practice.

Today, martial arts are growing in popularity throughout the world. The face of karate today displays a variety of styles, teaching methods, goals and physical techniques. This variety ensures the vitality of the martial arts. However, Seido karate seeks to find the “original face” of the martial art, to take the founding tradition and apply and enrich it in a twentieth century context. Through the practice of Seido karate, every student should seek to discover what Dogen understood when he questioned the elderly Chinese monk.



### **Seido: History and Philosophy**

Seido karate is a strict, traditional Japanese style of karate, into which I have tried to distill the essence of what I have learned about the martial arts in over 30 years of study, practice and teaching.

The World Seido Karate Organization officially opened its headquarters on October 15, 1976, in New York City. It is a worldwide organization, with thriving branches in such diverse places as Australia, New Zealand, the Republic of South Africa, England, and South America. However, within Seido, growth of the branches is not being pursued for its own sake. Quality of instruction and of the students is paramount.

The physical training in Seido is strenuous, emphasizing progressive development of strength, flexibility and aerobic capacity. One of the goals of Seido karate training is to develop strong bodies, which contributes to health and a general sense of self-confidence and well-being. In addition to developing students with the highest level of physical skills, Seido aims to develop individuals of the highest moral character, individuals who can then make significant contributions to a better life in the family, the work place, and in society at large.

This goal is achieved by the integration of Zen meditation into the practice of each and every student. Seido is unique, I feel, because it stresses the unity and inseparability of karate and Zen. This is not a new idea. Rather, it is a return to the origins of the martial arts. By returning to the roots of karate, it can be made extremely valuable for men and women in this century and the next.

Zen is not taught as a religion in Seido. It is a practice, i.e., seated meditation, which has no religious overtones or content. In my experience, however, it is an essential counterpart to hard physical training. The samurai, whose lives and values gave so much to karate, strived to develop

bushido spirit. Today, our lives are much different from the samurai's, but the bushido spirit can still be translated into our milieu. Seido seeks to develop in each student a "nonquitting" spirit. No matter what the obstacle or difficulty—emotional, physical, financial—I want my students to feel that, though they may be set back, they will never be overcome by any of these problems. The sincere practice of karate can impress this idea into the spirit. This is the modern interpretation of the bushido spirit of the samurai.

The Seido emblem is the five-petaled blossom of the Japanese plum tree, which is also my family's emblem. It is my wish to carry over into Seido many of the things that I learned from my parents. I also wish to stress that all members of the World Seido Karate Organization are members of a family. No one in Seido trains as an isolated individual, no matter how good or skillful he or she is. Only by sharing and learning from others do we ourselves become whole and fully realize our human potential.



I founded Seido on three fundamental principles: **respect**, **love** and **obedience**. These are represented, incidentally, by the three circles within the center of the plum blossom of the Seido emblem. These principles represent what I have found to be essential to a healthy and productive practice of the martial arts. They also represent a way, or do, of being in everyday life.

If we truly have **respect** for others, it is inevitable that we treat them with courtesy and equanimity. It is when we do not have respect for others that we become angry with them, that we disparage them, that we find no value in what they say, and that we engage in destructive action. This lack of respect for others, oddly enough, is related to a lack of respect for ourselves. Karate, through the practice of zazen, makes us look at ourselves. If we do this sincerely, we inevitably find our beautiful, truly human core. To find this, however, we will have to wipe away many layers of dust and dirt, which cloud the bright surface of what the Zen masters call our "mirror mind" or "Buddha nature." When we see ourselves clearly, not with a vain love or callous self-indulgence, but with a healthy respect, we shall inevitably see others the same way. The Zen master says we shall see no separation—there is no self, and no other.

It is easy to do violence to another if you see that person as separate and distinct from you. Our society encourages us to think in terms of the "other" country, the "other" system. When we think this way, it is easy to deny to others the respect they are due. In Zen, when you bow, you bring your palms together in *gassho*. This means "two into one." There is no self and no other. Respect yourself and respect others.



Early morning training with Black Belt students.

Karate offers a means of building the principle of respect into a cornerstone of our lives. This is achieved through the strict, ritual courtesy and etiquette that all students practice every moment in the dojo. How we wear our uniforms, how we move, how we speak to senior students, how we bow—these are carefully prescribed and followed by all, regardless of rank. In one sense, this refines our manners and makes us more civilized people. In a deeper sense, it serves to ingrain **respect** into our characters.

**Love** is another fundamental principle of Seido. It is the most overused and misused word in the English language. Love grows out of respect. In fact, the two go hand in hand. People are very apt to express a sentimental love for another, yet they will show that same person much disrespect. With true love, this cannot be.

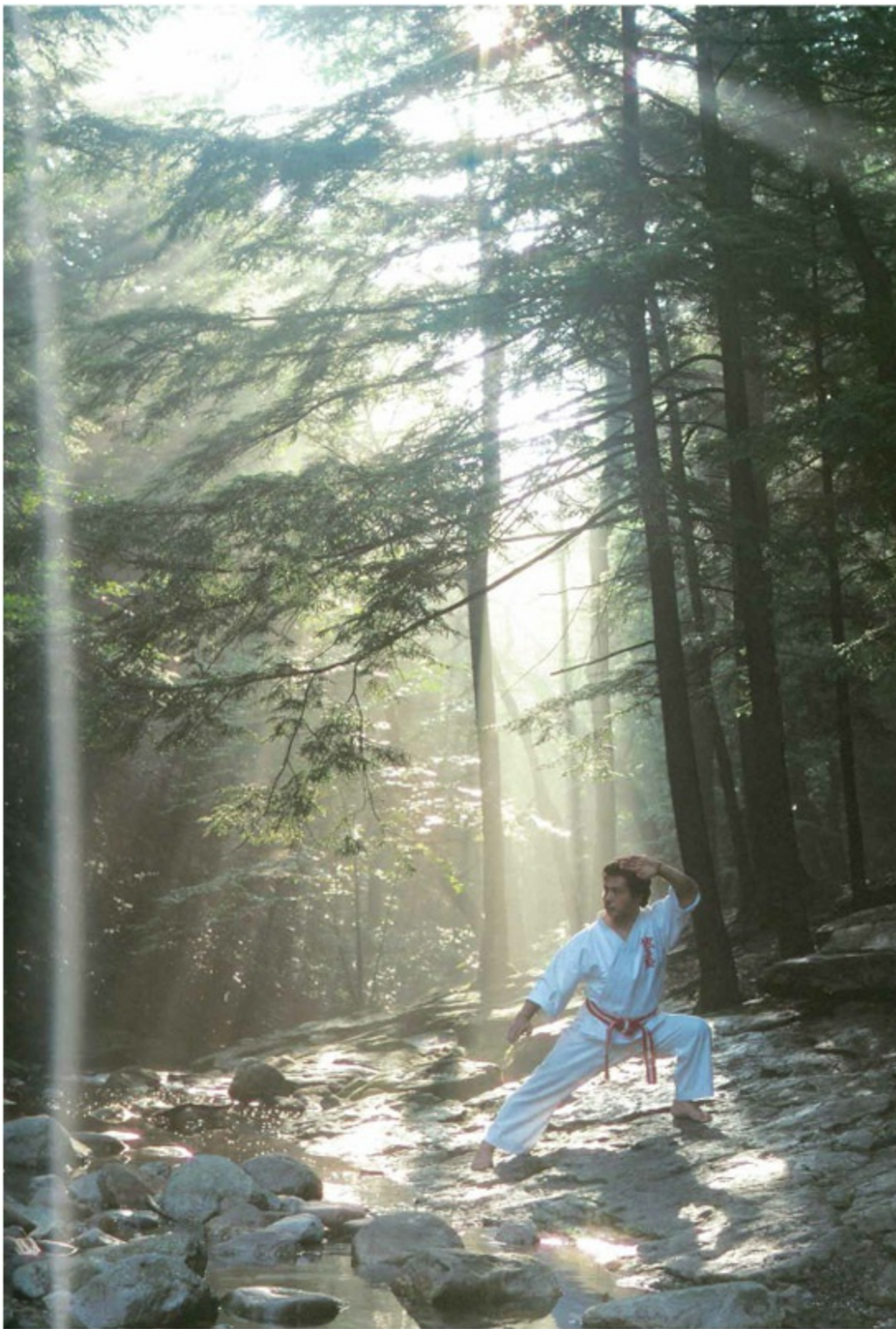
We must love our parents, who are our first and most important teachers. Our love for them can grow out of a real respect and appreciation for the sacrifice and suffering they have endured for our comfort. We can then give love to our families in the same way that it was given to us.

Shakyamuni Buddha, the founder of Buddhism, spent his whole life trying to find the cause of human suffering. After doing zazen under the banyan tree in India, he was enlightened. After his experience, he felt compassion for the suffering of humanity. Compassion means a moving of the insides; we feel so much for someone's pain and suffering that our insides hurt and are moved. Love, founded on a genuine compassion for others, is something that we should train ourselves to extend freely.



New York at twilight, with the Brooklyn Bridge and twin towers of the World Trade Center in the background.





Practicing kata at sunrise. Awosting Falls spillway, Upstate New York.

When we love freely, we can give and share everything. We need hold on to nothing. Our hands can be empty. Karate means “empty hand.”

The samurai loved rectitude, or right action. We should feel the same way. Morally and ethically, in all situations, we should train ourselves to love the just and honorable way of acting. **Obedience** is the final pillar in the foundation of Seido karate. In the basic sense, of course, it signifies being obedient to the rules and regulations of the dojo and of the organization. This is not out of some blind, military mind-set. Obedience goes with commitment. Students of Seido karate make a commitment to

train as hard as they can to develop mind, body and spirit into harmony and balance.

Obedience means obeying one's parents. Besides being an obligation in which I have a firm belief, it is a way of teaching humility and keeping the ego in check. No matter how old we are, we are still our parents' children.

We should also be obedient to the laws of our community and society. A good karate-ka is always a good citizen. There can be no duality in this regard. The highest obedience is to the moral and spiritual principles of our conscience, to which our parents have contributed much. I hope that every student of Seido Karate will be able to develop these highest individual principles and better understand him or herself.

Seido karate is growing, both here in the United States and overseas. The future growth of the system will depend on the successful transmission of the Seido principles of respect, love, and obedience through my senior students, in turn, to their students. I have been fortunate in my own training to have had the opportunity to instruct others. Over the years, I have had many outstanding students, of which I am very proud. Many senior black belts have been extremely successful in major open tournaments throughout the world, winning in **kata**, **kumite** and **breaking**. However, each and every one of my students contributes to the Seido organization in his or her individual way. Without the strong support of all my students, throughout the world, Seido could not have grown and developed as it is today.

At Seido, I want to create a secure place for anyone of any age or physical ability to train and learn. This is true at any Seido dojo, no matter where it is located. At Seido, we all train as a family. Cooperation, not competition, is the key word. Those who have more should share with others, giving advice and encouragement. The real competition is with yourself. The only requirement is that you give your absolute best effort at all times.

## **Ethical and Moral Values of Karate**

The ethical and moral foundation of *karate-do* comes from the samurai. All karate students are expected to make these principles and values part of their behavior, applying them to their conduct in and out of the dojo.

### **Gi (rectitude)**

This means making the right decision in every situation and doing it without wavering. The right decision is the moral one, the just one, the honorable one.

### **Yu (heroism)**

Obviously, this meant something different in feudal Japan than it will in ordinary life. There are many possibilities for heroism in everyday life. Heroism and bravery mean taking risks, perhaps to our position, our status, and our self-interest.

### **Jin (universal love, compassion)**

Compassion means, literally, a moving of the insides as a result of feeling for someone's pain or suffering. Karate stresses action, and we should always strive to find ways to express our compassion for our family, friends, neighbors and those less fortunate than ourselves.

### **Rei (courtesy)**



Courtesy is a quality the modern world sorely lacks. It is perhaps more relevant now than in feudal times, since courtesy signals respect and compassion for others. It is something that karate students should constantly practice.

### **Makoto (truthfulness)**

Seido means “sincere way.” In all dealings with others, karate students should develop a sincere, honest straightforwardness. This can do much to improve modern interpersonal relations.

### **Chugo (devotion, loyalty)**

One of the cornerstones of Seido is obedience. It refers to this value in the samurai. A student should be absolutely loyal and devoted, first and always, to parents and family. These are one’s origins, roots, and foundation. Secondly, if a student decides to pursue the way of karate, he/she should always remember the importance of loyalty to the organization and to the teachers who guide the student along the path of growth and self-improvement.



### **Karate: Moving Zen**

A famous Zen master, Taisen Deshimaru, has said, “Only two things matter, energy and action.” What does he mean? The practice of zazen, seated meditation, can free us from our small “selves” and from our small “minds” and help us to realize our original natures. In a tangible way, it does energize us, by helping to regulate the autonomic nervous system, by increasing our vital capacity and the efficiency of oxygen exchange, and by calming the mind. But, if we were to sit like monks and become concentrated and focused, what of it? If we withdraw from the frenetic chaos of life to the monastery, is this not delusion also? It is, if there is no action.

Zazen creates energy, or it helps us tap our innate wellspring of energy. Karate trains us in applying that energy to action. Karate is action and movement: slow and fast, soft and hard, small and large, solitary and with others. These are all the types of action that we experience in our daily lives. In karate, we practice them with the energy of Zen. When we walk, it is Zen. When we run and jump, it is Zen. Karate Zen links energy and action. This is what we are practicing over and over, day by day.

When we leave the dojo and go back out into the market place of life, we take our practice and give it to others. Karate means “empty hand.” An empty hand clings to nothing. It does not hold on to preconceptions, prejudice, or the status quo. An empty hand can give and be of service to others. As we move about in our daily lives, we are practicing moving zen, total involvement and absorption in the present moment.

When someone watches a karate master do a kata, one is absolutely riveted by the beauty and power of the movements. They do not have to be explained, and they do not appear to be learned, but

seem to come from within. If this experience were possible only in the dojo, then karate would be of limited value. However, it is possible for students to have the same experience in their everyday lives: a teacher giving a lecture; a stockbroker working in the chaos of the trading floor; a nurse in the charged atmosphere of a hospital. We study karate Zen to get in touch with our “original self” and to take that “big self” and put it to work to alleviate the suffering of others.

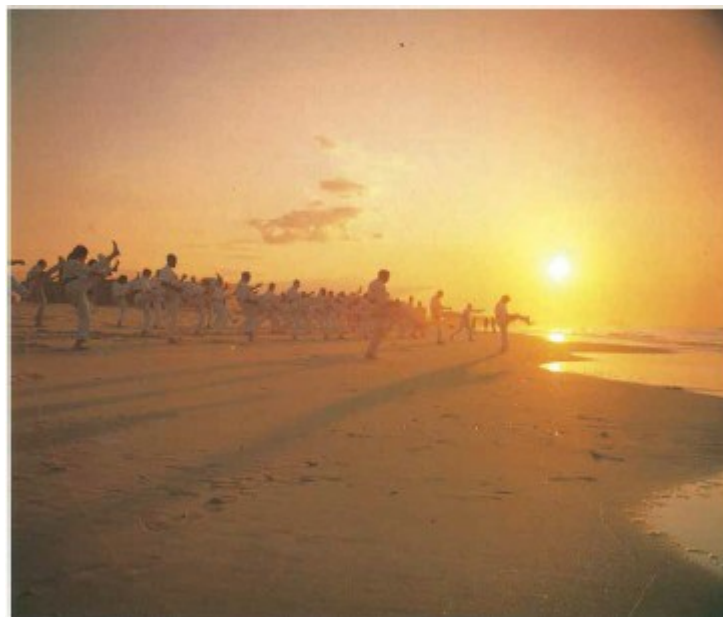
In the martial arts, there are many “ways,” e.g., judo, kendo, kyudo, karate-do. Zen gives them a single common ground.

*“... if one practices and realizes the Buddha way, when one gains one dharma, one penetrates one dharma. When one encounters one action, one practices one action.” Genjokoan*

If every movement and every action in our lives were infused with this ideal, how much richer, more enjoyable and more productive our lives would be.



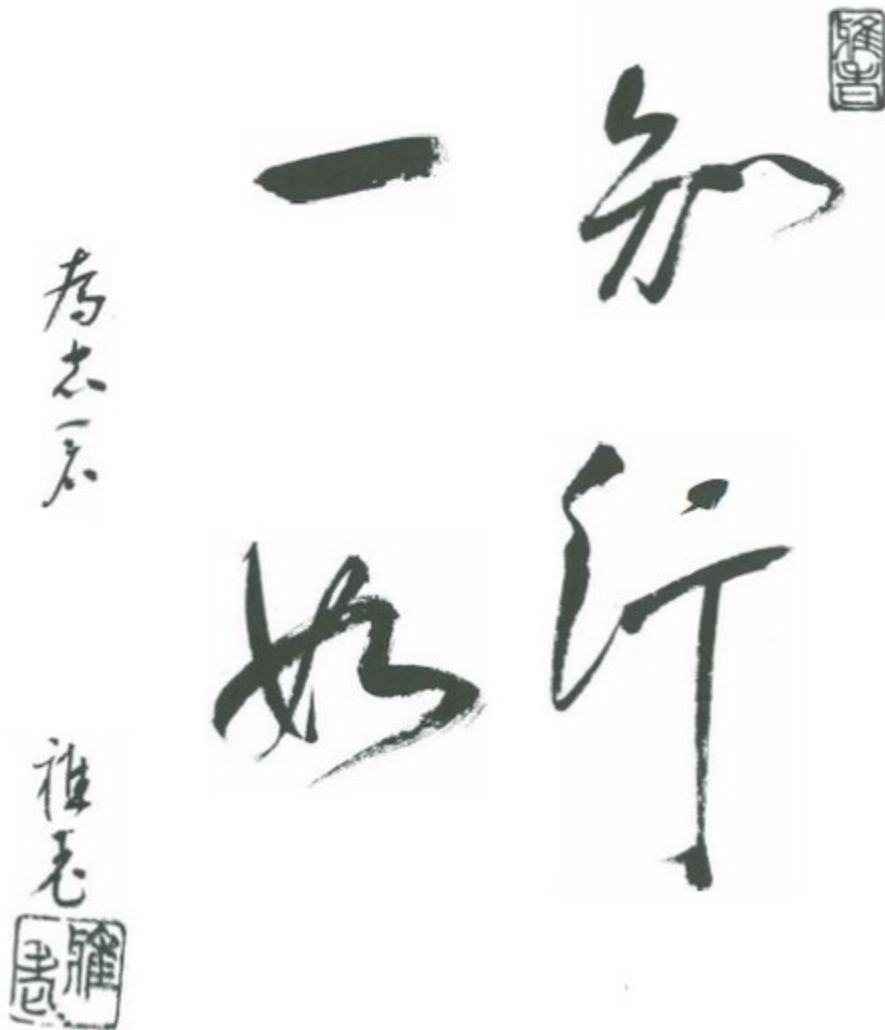
Seido Black Belts, assembled for 1985 annual clinic. (Battery Park, at entrance to New York Harbor, lower Manhattan).



Annual Black Belt beach training. Sunrise at Rockaway Beach, New York.

## Chi Gyo Ichi Nyo

The word *chi* means knowledge. *Gyo* means doing or action. *Ichi nyo* means inseparable. Acting without adequate knowledge or understanding is a constant source of consternation and problems. We are often busy and active, without really understanding the basis of our actions or their full impact. Some people study karate without knowing why they are really studying. In class they do the techniques without understanding their purpose, and so they lose much of the benefit. They do push-ups without understanding their purpose. Is the purpose just pain or just building strong arms? Or do they understand that they are building a stronger spirit, a nonquitting attitude? Do children come to class because their parents want them to, or for themselves? For what reasons do the students seek a black belt? For self-satisfaction? To impress others? Without real knowledge and understanding of why we do such things, we fail to get the full benefits and to realize our potential.





# Karate in Everyday Life



At the office, a student must deal with many different demands on her time.

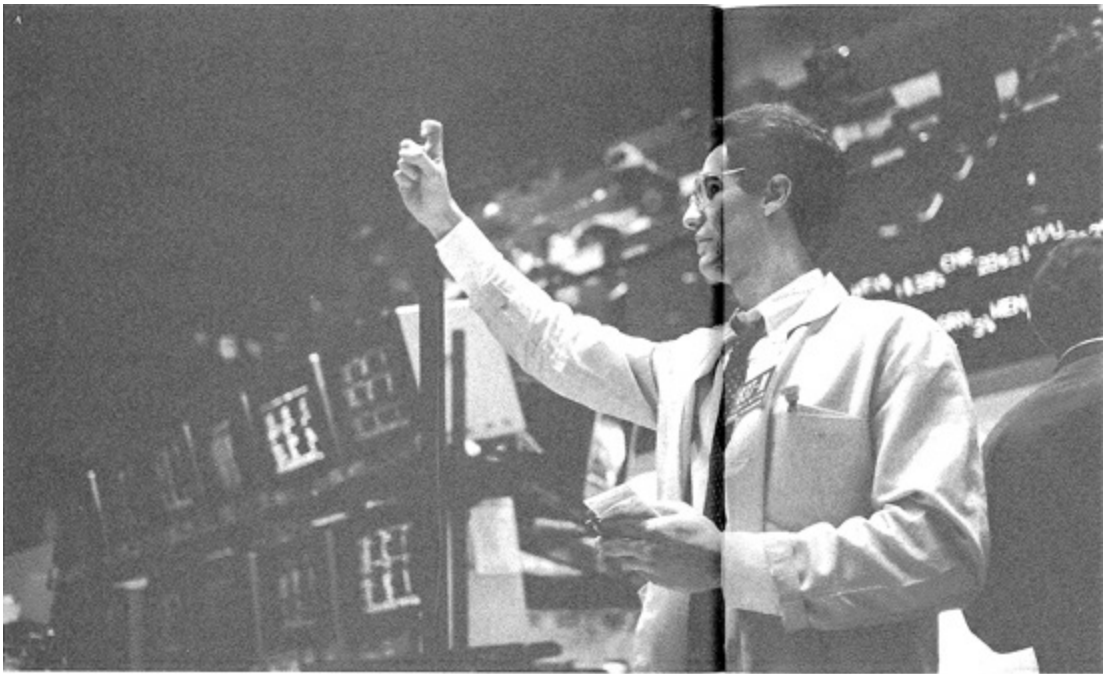


Work is finished, it's time to train.

A true *karate-ka* takes the physical skills, discipline and power of concentration developed at the dojo and applies them to work, family and social life. In this way, karate is integrated into the fabric of our lives; it is not something separate. The way of karate is the way of everyday life.



An executive can still be a student, practicing weapons and basic kicks.



A Floor broker on the stock exchange, subject to lots of pressure and stress.





**B** Time to forget work, and train.

**C** Concentrate on only one thing.



**A** An advanced student practices weapons with intense concentration.



**B** Bow when you come to train.



*C* Junior students watch and learn from seniors.





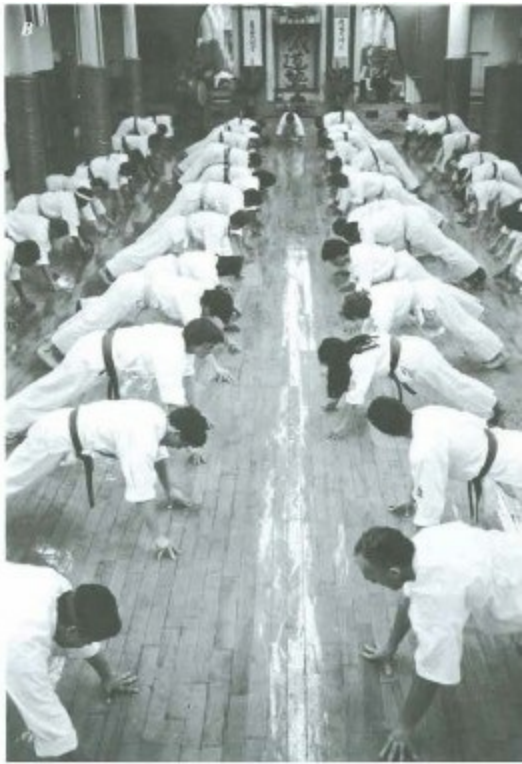


*D, E* The same concentration practiced at the dojo is brought to the job.





*A, C* Students training in class.



*B* Time to *kiai*!

All students in a karate dojo, whatever their rank, are governed by the same rules of courtesy and respect. If you respect yourself, for example, you always want to practice in a clean dojo. You show your respect for others by undertaking to clean the dojo floor with a damp rag after class. Since we are all united by the same values in Seido karate, we all clean the floor together. Symbolically, this practice, which comes from Zen, represents the wiping away of delusion from our minds.



## Application to Modern Living

This book is about a traditional way of karate and it is hoped that the reader will be able to understand, to some extent, the real foundations of this martial art. However, it is logical to ask, "What tangible benefits does karate Zen have for twentieth century life?"

First, karate is an extremely efficient form of **physical conditioning**, that can be practiced by women, children and men of all ages and abilities. It develops aerobic fitness by raising the heart rate into the training zone and keeping it there for significant intervals. Strength is developed progressively through exercises using the body's own weight. Emphasis is also placed on developing and maintaining flexibility through progressive stretching of major muscle groups. In the Seido system, every student is asked to constantly give 100% in his/her training, recognizing the individual's own capacities and limitations. Training is done only under the supervision of certified black belt instructors.

Secondly, karate is the most efficient form of **self-defense**, which is very important in today's urban society. Students learn basic kicks, punches and blocks that develop self-confidence. Beyond that, they learn specific combinations of techniques that are applied in specific situations. Seido students are also taught to develop an inner awareness for avoiding potentially threatening situations.

Finally, the study of karate develops **discipline** and **concentration**, skills that are useful for children, students, artists and men and women in all walks of life. Students usually notice subtle changes in the way they do their work or in the way they study. If one practices sincerely, in time, these benefits flow almost automatically, without conscious effort.

These are the direct, tangible benefits of studying karate, and they are all highly relevant to the needs of people today. Don't study karate to achieve these benefits, though. If you practice in a sincere manner, these things will come along the way. They can each or together be reasons for beginning, but if they become the reason for practicing, our practice will become stale after some time.

*“Now if a bird or a fish tries to reach the limit of its elements before moving in it, the bird or this fish will not find its way or its place.” Genjokoan*

The main thing is to **begin**; once a student has begun the study of karate, the only thing is to **practice**, to **continue**. The rest will become apparent to you, and to you alone.



In the tea ceremony (*Sado*), the guest takes time to appreciate and enjoy a cup of green tea. In life, too, we have to take time.



## **Breathing Methods**





### **Master Nakamura Practicing the Martial Art of Iai**

The student of the martial arts can enhance concentration and develop a sense of peace and tranquility through the disciplined practice of the one-pointed technique.

Life is breath. Breath is life. When someone is dead, we say, “He has stopped breathing.” Breathing is a natural function. No one teaches a baby how to breathe, yet a baby breathes easily and fully, its belly rising and falling in easy rhythms. The central role of the breath is strange and mystical to the twentieth century Western mind. Indian yogis believe that we partake of the energy, or essence, of life (*prana*) through breathing; in fact, they feel that our lives are measured by a certain number of breaths, each one taken bringing us closer to the end of our bodily function. In the Old Testament of the Bible, when God created the earth, he “breathed” upon the waters. In the everyday world, Japanese business schools teach their students, when involved in complicated or contentious negotiations, to control their breathing and to understand the pattern of the person on the opposite side of the table.

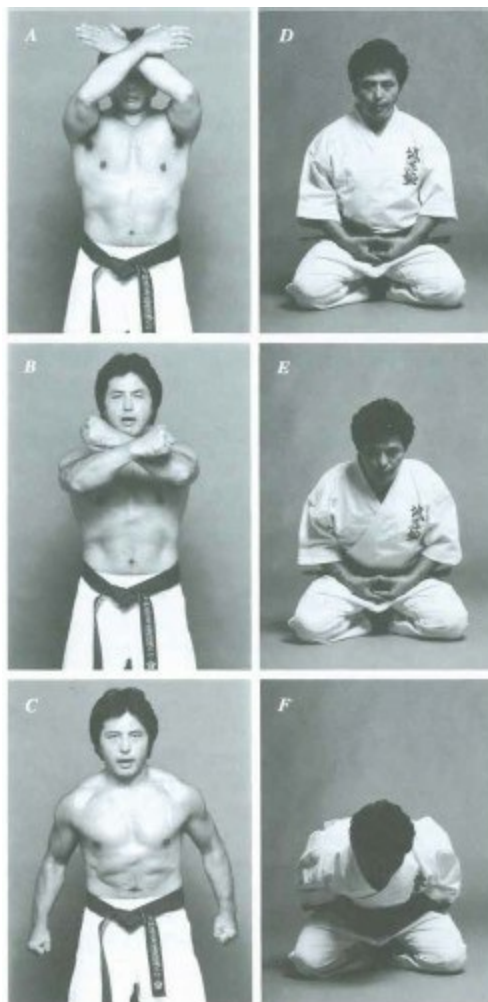
In Zen, posture is the key. If the posture is good, then the breathing will follow. We shall begin to experience once again what we knew as babies. However, it is useful to talk about certain breathing methods, techniques and mechanics of breathing. Physicians, and sports trainers in recent times, have studied and described the physiology and mechanics of breathing.

Basically, most of us breathe too often, and the breath is too shallow. Hence, the foul air in the lower part of our lungs is never fully expelled. Conversely, on the intake cycle, our lungs are never filled up much beyond a third of their actual volume. A doctor would say that we are not using more than a fraction of our “vital capacity.” Hence, the whole process of oxygen exchange in our bloodstream is inefficient. The blood is improperly cleansed of carbon dioxide, and our brains and nervous systems are never fully oxygenated. The deleterious effects manifest themselves physically, mentally and emotionally.

An average person at rest completes 15-18 breathing cycles per minute (a cycle is one inhalation plus one exhalation). Although this feels natural and comfortable, Zen masters say this is too fast. When you sit in zazen, you must let your breath “sit” also. An experienced practitioner can breath

quite normally at five cycles per minute, some even slower. Quite a difference!

The Zen concept of breathing is tied up with the concept of *hara*, roughly equivalent to the belly. Western people, whose behavior is dominated by the frontal lobes of the brain, have their breath centered in the upper parts of their bodies. They tend to breathe with their shoulders and necks. This shallow breathing is called “intercostal breathing.” In Zen, we are taught to center the breath in the *hara*; in karate, the body is centered in the *tanden*, a spot about four fingers directly below the navel. It is the center around which our arms, legs and bodies move.



## IBUKI

*A* Student has filled his lungs with air, starting with lower abdomen. Now he begins the exhalation.

*B* With mouth open, and abdomen tensed, exhale forcibly as the arms uncross.

*C* Exhale all the air from the lungs, using a small cough to clear out the last residue. Note how the abdominal muscles are active.

## ZEN EXHALATION

*D* Exhaling in zazen. The mouth is slightly open and the tongue is between the lips.

*E* Squeeze the lower abdomen as the body leans forward at the waist.

*F* Finishing position.

**Karate**

## Exhalation Using Ibuki Breathing

- Hold abdominal muscles tight.

- Keep the lower abdomen tensed, with awareness of the muscles gripped tight.
- Open mouth wide, throat open and relaxed, windpipe free, tongue relaxed, held in lower palate.
- Squeeze from the hara, forcibly and audibly exhaling until lungs are completely emptied of air.
- Expel last trace of air with small cough.

## Zen

### Exhalation

- Let belly fall back in and breathe out slowly, at twice the count of the inhalation. This is the active phase of the breath in Zen. When exhalation is complete, feel a squeezing down in the hara.

In order to bring the breath down to the hara, we must first have good posture, which means the spine erect and long, and the abdominal area free. The diaphragm, a thick, membrane-like muscle that is stretched across the body, is pulled down when we inhale. If we are relaxed, when the diaphragm pulls down, the belly just naturally pushes outward. When we exhale, we are forcing the diaphragm upward, compressing the volume of the chest cavity like a piston and forcing air from our lungs. When we do this naturally, the belly falls in. Thus, when we watch our own breath, we see our belly moving in and out gently, like waves moving in and retreating from the seashore.

Basically, the chest should be relatively stationary when we breathe. Everything is directed to moving the breath down to the *hara*, or *tanden*. In karate, the *tanden* is the source of power. When an experienced karate-ka is going to break a brick or a stone (*tameshiwari*), you may see him reaching inside to clutch at his hara, or tanden, to see that it is firm and full of breath and spirit. This is where real power, mental and physical, comes from. This is one of the unique features of the martial arts as opposed to other physical systems of exercise.

Eugen Herrigel, the author of *Zen and The Art of Archery*, was a German professor who went to Japan to study Zen. He was told, “It is very difficult. If you want to study Zen, you should practice a martial art first.” Herrigel was very good with a rifle, so he took up kyudo (archery). But it took him six years before he understood how to breathe. He understood about “pushing down with the intestines,” and he realized that the arrow was released at the end of the outward breath. When you are breathing out, you are strong—you can break a board, you can throw an opponent in judo, you can absorb a blow and not be hurt. When you are inhaling, you are weak. In karate, you may often hear a student give a loud shout (*kiiai*) as he/ she is executing a kick or a punch. The student is training to time the execution of the technique with the exhalation. This maximizes the power applied. The shout encourages and facilitates the forceful and complete exhalation of air. So this is just the application of the Zen principles of breathing in action.

## Breathing

### Nogare (Short Wave/Long Wave)

- Breathe only using the nose.
- Fill up the lungs from bottom to top (long wave), letting belly rise first, then the stomach. Holding these stationary, fill up lungs below shoulders by letting upper chest rise up also.
- Holding abdominal wall taut, take quick inhalation, letting belly move out rapidly (short wave).



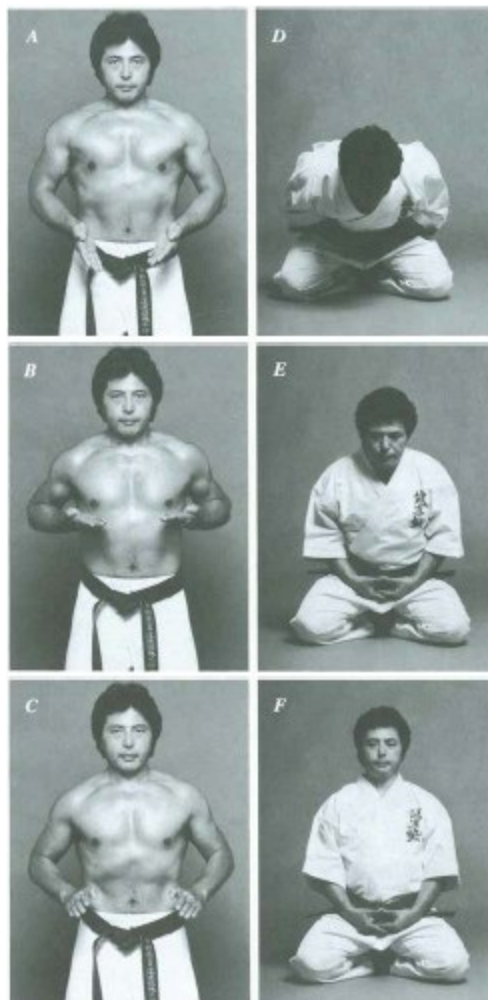
# Breathing

## Inhalation

- Breathe only using the nose.
- Center the breathing in the belly, letting the breath out naturally without using the abdominal or chest areas at all.

In karate and Zen, therefore, the principles underlying the breath are the same. The mechanics of some breathing techniques are slightly different, but they arise largely from the setting, i.e., *zazen* versus moving Zen.

As with all phases of karate, experience is the key to understanding. Experience is gained through individual practice. An experienced teacher and the atmosphere of a *zendo* or *dojo* are important in creating the atmosphere for serious study and for giving the student the proper grounding so he/she may learn correct techniques. If you want to learn how to breathe, just sit *shikantaza*.



## NOGARE

- A* The hands, starting at your sides, come up, as you inhale through the nose.
- B* Fill the lungs with air, starting from low stomach.
- C* Finishing position.

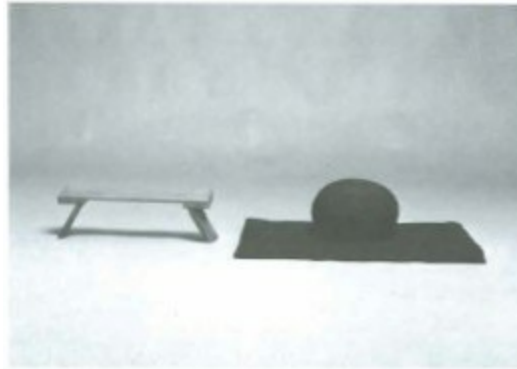
## ZEN INHALATION

*D* Beginning inhalation cycle, using the nose.

*E* Inhale as the trunk comes up.

*F* Finish erect in zazen. Make the exhalation cycle twice as long as the inhalation cycle.

## Postures



Seiza Bench left; Zabuton (flat cushion) and Zafu (thick cushion), right



Seiza (left); Full lotus (right)



Agura (left); half lotus (right)



Beginning position for formal bow.



Karate bow (left) and Zen bow (right)



Exchange of standing bows.

## General Principles

When you sit, the two major issue are:

1. How your weight is supported.
2. The alignment of your body.

The body's weight is best supported by a tripod, or pyramid. When seated on the floor or on a cushion, the tripod is formed by the two knees and the buttocks. When seated on a chair, the soles of the feet flat on the floor and the buttocks on the forward edge of the chair form the supporting tripod.

Once you are seated, the most important thing to consider is the alignment of the spinal column. Forget the old military adage, "Back straight!"; the spine should not be held rigidly erect, and, in fact, it would be too tiring to sustain this position for very long anyway. **Think long.** That is, the spine should be allowed to stretch freely along its length, thereby ensuring that there is no compression anywhere to cause discomfort or to block the flow of energy. There will be some natural curvature to the spine, particularly in the lumbar area. In fact, the pelvic area should be tilted slightly forward. If

you put together the idea of lengthening the spine and tilting the pelvis forward, two things should happen:

1. The vertebrae should align themselves on top of one another, assuming no inherent sub-luxation.
2. The internal organs will be properly aligned in the vertical plane. This will ensure that the stomach area is not compressed, which would prevent the student from breathing properly.

To reinforce these ideas, some Zen masters constantly say “Chin in!” This means that the chin should be tucked in slightly, and the student should try to imagine that he is supporting the ceiling with the top of his head. Try it. You’ll see that if you tuck your chin slightly and push with your head (it must be with the back part of the head, right?), the effect is to make you want to lengthen the spine. Just so!

Finally, there will be problems associated with individual issues of where and how we hold our tension. Doing zazen can put us in touch with things about our postures that we never even noticed. Most people hold one shoulder higher than another. Some people who carry their tension in the cervical and upper dorsal areas of the back, carry their shoulders near their ears. If you center your tension in the stomach, there is a tendency for the pelvic area to slump, so that the spine curves outward, when viewed from the side. Those with hip problems may tend to sit on one hip, thereby negating the principle of a tripod. Everyone has problems with flexibility in the knees and ankles. What should you do? **Don’t worry.** Be aware of the problem each time you sit and try to correct it, but don’t become obsessed with it. Remember that you are trying to find a natural equilibrium, but that you have been for many years in an unnatural one, through the effects of stress and certain physical imbalances. It will take time and practice to overcome these.

When you sit, you shouldn’t be concerned too much with what to wear. However, loose fitting baggy clothes are best. In particular, tight trousers that constrict the waist or legs are to be avoided. Karate gi pants make excellent investments for exercise and meditation because they are cut full in the legs and the drawstring waist can sit loosely.

All the seated postures, to some degree, place stress on the front part of the knees, which must stretch and hold that position. To alleviate this problem, there are two solutions:

1. A *seiza* bench (see opposite page).
2. The combination of a *zabuton* (thick rectangular mat and a *zafu* (a pill-shaped cushion filled with kapok) (see opposite page).

Experienced practitioners can sit without these aids, but it is not necessary to do so. The idea of these aids is to give the body some elevation so as to remove some of the stress from the knees and to prevent slumping of the lumbar spinal area. In addition, the zabuton cushions the bones just below the kneecap from contact with a hardwood floor.

When you sit, you must sit somewhere. Obvious, right? The place **where** you sit will affect **how** you sit, particularly as a beginner. It is best to establish a place, no matter how small, to sit every day. It can be a corner of a room, or it can be a separate room, or it can be outside. Make sure that the place is clean, free from dust, airy (but not in a direct draft), and bathed in natural light (but not fully). You should not be too warm or too cold. If you do sit outside, you must find a place where you can sit unobserved and undisturbed by people or stray animals. This may be difficult.

Take a few measures to ensure that the time you sit will be high-quality time. Take a piece of tape and put it over your doorbell. Take the jack from your phone and remove it from the wall. Use no music, although it is possible to use certain meditative types of *shakuhachi* (wooden flute) music with supervision. Pick a time when things are quiet. In a city, this is difficult. Good times are at dawn,

before garbage collection starts and the city wakes up, and dusk. Dinner time is good, in particular, since most people will be eating quietly and there is less likely to be noise from above or below. Try your best to ensure that your 10 minutes of zazen will be fully 10 minutes of sitting only. The main thing that most Zen masters stress is to sit every day. If you are consistent about this, even for 10 minutes, you will progress without a doubt and perhaps you will decide to sit for longer periods. Daily practice is the key.

## **Seiza**

This is the posture used in the dojo for zazen. When using a seiza bench, sit on the forward third of the bench, using it just as a support for the buttocks. The knees are spread apart shoulder width. Too narrow an opening defeats the idea of a tripod; too wide an opening puts undue stress on the knees and groin, as well as being considered bad etiquette.

In meditation, the hands would be in *hoin*. In the dojo, the student makes two fists and places them on the hips, with the fists parallel to the ears. The elbows are drawn into the body and not held akimbo. The right instep is crossed over on top of the left instep. The shoulders are held slightly back but relaxed, and the chin is tucked in slightly, with the back of the neck stretched, thereby lengthening the spine.

This is a relatively easy position for many people. Problems arise usually in inflexibility of the knees, which makes some people unable to come down and sit on their knees, or in inflexibility of the ankle joints themselves.

## **Kekka Fuza (Full Lotus Position)**

This is the most pure, most difficult posture. It is the one used by advanced yoga and Zen students. It requires freedom and flexibility in the hips, knees and ankles, and it is often particularly difficult for men. It is the most desirable posture because it is the most stable and symmetrical and offers the most support for the spine. You will most probably have to work toward using this posture. Do it slowly and do not force yourself into it.

*Kekka fuza* is a cross-legged position, and you place your right foot on your left thigh first, and then the left foot on your right (or vice versa, it doesn't matter). The feet are placed high up on the thighs, with the soles of the feet pointing up toward the ceiling. The toes should be clear of the legs, so that you can wiggle them freely. Use of the zafu will pitch you forward slightly and your spine will almost automatically fall into the proper position. The strain on the inner part of the knees and the hips can be considerable for a beginner. Be careful. If it is uncomfortable, try it for a while; if it is painful stop right away and use an alternative posture.

## **Hanka Fuza (Half-Lotus Position)**

This position is basically the same as the full lotus, except that one ankle (say, the right), instead of resting on the opposite thigh, rests on the floor (or zabuton) tucked in toward the groin. *Hanka fuza* has the same tripod characteristics as kekka fuza, and it is much easier to get into the posture. However, it is not a symmetrical posture. The left knee (assuming the left ankle is tucked high on the right thigh) will have a tendency to come off the ground. Then, we will have the natural inclination to sit toward the left side, since there is no real support there. There is also a stronger tendency for the lumbar spine to slump in this posture than in kekka fuza.

These problems can be overcome by concentrating on keeping the spine erect and on pushing the

knee down. Using a higher zafu or bench also achieves the same result. This position usually prepares the student to move on to the full lotus position.

### **Agura (Burmese Position)**

The Burmese position is the easiest cross-legged position for the beginning student. In this position, both ankles are brought in toward the groin, but they are not tucked on the opposite legs. This is a very comfortable tripodal position. The problem is that slumping in the lumbar area is almost inevitable, unless the student happens to be an advanced practitioner already. This position alleviates the stress on the knees that both *kekka fuza* and *hanka fuza* generate. If the student sits on a much higher zafu, so that the pelvis is tilted forward and the body is pitched onto the knees firmly, the tendency of the back to slump can be counteracted. Usually, this position becomes very tiring for the lower back.

### **Tachi Zen (Standing Meditation)**

In the dojo, standing meditation is also used, often within a karate class itself as a form of Zen practice.

Assume the standing posture of *tachi zen*. Bring both arms directly in front of you, with the elbows slightly bent and the shoulders relaxed. Turn the palms up, fingers together and thumbs bent and tucked inward. This is called *mae ba no kamae*. If you were to take your left foot and draw it back behind your right, you would actually have a fighting posture that dates from the old Shaolin Temple days of Bodhidharma.

With the hands in the position described above, close your eyes, maintain your posture and breathe deeply and slowly. This is a good exercise in concentration and mind control.

### **Walking Meditation (Kinhin)**

This is used in both the zendo and the dojo as a logical follow-on to long sessions of *zazen*. *Kinhin* has a purely functional purpose. After long periods of seated meditation, you will find that the legs “fall asleep.” *Kinhin* helps to restore the circulation to the lower limbs and extremities.



Mae Ba No Kamae

When we do *zazen*, we utilize a posture that frees us to breathe fully and naturally. Doing this, we are concentrating and releasing our full physical and spiritual energies. However, the energy is



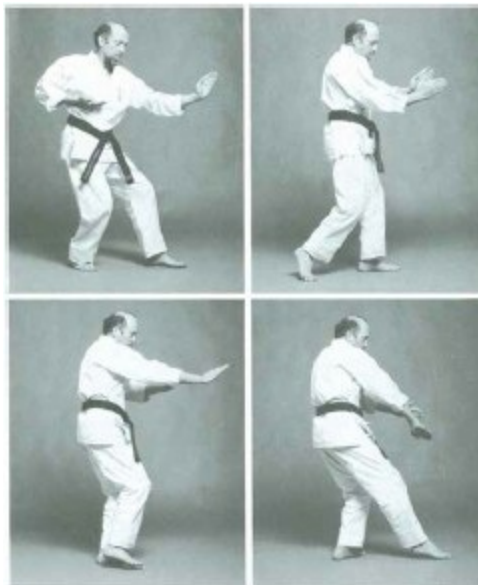
stationary; it is not dynamic, not in motion. The next step, the other side is to take this focused energy and put it into motion. That is kinhin.

In the dojo, when we do a kata slowly, concentrating on the coordination of the movements and our breathing, we are doing kinhin. At the zendo, the same principles are more formalized. The idea is to break down walking into little parts, each one done extremely slowly, with absolute concentration. The next tiny movement is not begun until the last one is finished. An outsider watching kinhin in a zendo could surmise that he were watching a film where the projector had *almost* stopped advancing the reel.

In practicing kinhin, certain principles are essential, as follows:

1. Slide your feet. Both feet are always in contact with the ground. You are always in contact with the earth. If one foot were off the ground, you would not be walking, but standing on one leg.
2. Feel and understand where your weight is at all times. Where is the center of your body? It should be in the hara. Feel how your weight must shift if, for example, a foot must slide forward. Try to make the shifts of weight and balance smoothly and effortlessly.
3. Try not to let the body sway or shift aimlessly from side to side.
4. Make each step slow, slower, and slower still.
5. Your breathing should be continuous and coordinated with the movements. If this is to be true and the breaths are long, then the number of breaths per minute is very low. Some Zen masters can do kinhin, while breathing only twice per minute!

After doing slow kinhin, the monitor at the zendo claps and then everybody speeds up. What happens when you speed up? It is natural to lose all the connections that we established by zazen and slow kinhin. Suddenly, we are lifting off the ground, leading asymmetrically with one leg, swaying back and forth, and breathing irregularly on uneven steps. That is the reason for the practice: to take what we do in zazen and put it into action, or motion. That is **moving Zen** or true karate.



Right foot stepping forward in karate.



Right foot steps forward in kinhin.





Kneeling bow in the dojo

## BASICS OF KARATE-DO TRAINING

### Karate-do Etiquette

#### Training Hall (Dojo)



The Japanese word *dojo*, or training hall, has its origins in a Sanskrit word, “bodhimandala,” meaning “place of enlightenment.” As such, it is quite different from a gym or health club. In a health club, for example, after a student pays his fee, he assumes that keeping the place clean is a service to be done by others, for which he/she has paid. In the dojo, this is not so.

Of course, students in a modern dojo pay a fee also. However, a dojo becomes a special place only by the respect that the students as a group, or community, have for it. If everyone believes that it is a place to study and perfect the self, then how could it be kept clean by others? It is our place. We are making a shared commitment to it and to our practice. With a shared commitment comes a shared responsibility, including that for keeping the place spotless. After each class, students together, regardless of rank, wipe the floor down with a rag. This old tradition dates from the earliest times and is maintained in all traditional dojos. This action, which is functional, is also symbolic of the need to make our egos smaller. No matter what a student does on the outside—doctor, lawyer, businessman—he/she can clean the dojo alongside the people with whom he/she trains.

The dojo is a place to foster a sense of community and belonging, because this is what gives the martial arts a distinction from the isolated, alienated atmosphere that pervades other places of physical training.

In the karate dojo, there is a very strict, formalized etiquette, covering how to greet people, how to enter and leave the dojo, how to fix your uniform while on the floor, and how to tie your belt. These little formalities are scrupulously observed by all students, not just by new students. Etiquette is not a question of rank.

There is a hierarchy in a traditional karate dojo. The hierarchy is based on the grade (white belt through brown belt) or rank (degrees within black belt) of the student. A student's level is a shorthand way of acknowledging his/her experience. It is merely a way of indicating the amount of effort the student has put in to gain the particular experience that she or he has had in the dojo. Belts are not a surrogate caste system.

Courtesy is based on respect: for oneself, for others, and for the dojo, or training hall. The basic expression of respect and courtesy, which comes from Japanese culture, is the bow. At Seido Juku, every class begins and ends with a short period of zazen. In the beginning of class, it is used to clear the mind and to focus it on the training ahead. After class, it is used to think over what was done, what needs to be done, and to prepare the student to go back out into the hurly-burly of the outside world. The mechanics of two basic bows are described below.

## Standing Bow

There are many variations on the hand positions for the bow, so the basic one is described. Normally, the feet may be held shoulder-width apart, although it is more respectful to bring the soles of the feet together (*heisoku dachi*). The hands are held in a fist at your sides, slightly in front, so as to be in view. When you bow, the knees are slightly bent, and the bow is from the waist. The more profound the bow, the deeper the bend. The head also goes down, which is very important to the symbolism. When we bow in the dojo, usually we also say “*Osu*”, which is a contraction of *osu-shinobu*. It dates back from the rough days of the samurai period, and it is basically a greeting and salutation. It means, however, something more profound. “*Shinobu*” means patience. The way (do) requires patience and constant practice, because there is no end and no goal, there is just the practice. We need to constantly remind ourselves of this fact. That is why you will hear the dojo constantly resounding with “osu.”



Tea cup (Wabi)

## Kneeling Bow

In the karate dojo, when we kneel in zazen, the usual posture is seiza. When you bow in seiza, the fists are brought directly in front of the knees, about one fist away from each knee. The body is actually raised up from the lower limbs, and you support yourself on the first two knuckles of each hand. Raising oneself up requires effort, which symbolizes the respect you are showing to the other person. Again, as in the standing bow, the bow originates in the bending forward from the waist, typically about 30 degrees, with the head also going down. As this is done, a loud “*Osu!*” to the person you are bowing to is shouted out. The gaze is focused slightly ahead of your own body, at about a 45-degree



angle. The bow is complete when you are back sitting on your ankles and the upper body is erect.

Bowing does much to perfect the manners and to make a person more civilized. This is one reason why it is practiced. In karate it also has a deeper symbolism. We live in an age that worships symbols of power, wealth and extravagance. With these come the building up of the individual ego. With that, says the Zen master, comes suffering and delusion. We can be short and rude to a stranger, or we can get the best of someone through a small deception. This is “OK.” After all, “I’m OK., you’re OK.” This is not the philosophy of karate.

When we bow, we are pulling on the bridle of our own egos. We are at the dojo to study ourselves. But, as Dogen saw in his enlightenment:

*“To study the self is to forget the self. To forget the self is to be enlightened by the ten thousand dharmas. To be enlightened by the ten thousand dharmas is to free one’s body and mind and those of others.” Genjokoan*



Black Belt showing years of experience (Sabi).

The self to which we have all sworn allegiance is composed of a pastiche of wishes, images, impressions and models foisted on us by others. When we bow, we forget this small self. When we bow, we strike a blow at the ego, which separates us from others and from our real “self.” The dojo is a place where people come to train, study, grow and change. Much of our ordinary behavior in business, for example, is aimed at defending the status quo, our own rank and position. In the dojo, we are looking to shed old skin for new in a constant process of physical, mental and spiritual growth.

## **Karate Uniform and Equipment**

At Seido Juku, all students wear plain, bright white uniforms, made of heavy cotton or canvas. Students wear two patches, as shown in the picture, and nothing else is allowed on the gi. No jewelry or personal paraphernalia is worn during class. The belts are plain, cotton, interfaced with batting and stitched. No one wears a better or worse uniform than anyone else.

This simplicity and sparseness comes from Zen, for it is said that the monks who practiced the martial arts in China and Japan practiced only in their plain cotton underwear. The modern gi is an updating of this original uniform.

This spartan, simple understatement is referred to in Japanese as wabi. This term arose from attempts to describe the whole Zen aesthetic sense: simple, yet highly formal, gardens; paintings that often had very few brush strokes and little pictorial detail; monks’ robes made out of the plainest dyed materials. Western culture, on the other hand, admires terms like “glitter,” “glitz,” and “flash.” These are not bad and they are not good. They merely get in the way, and so the Zen aesthetic cuts them all away, to reveal something of the inner essence of an object.

When one sees a student for the first time, it is not possible to judge the station in life, profession,



or ability by the uniform. The only means to evaluate the person as a karate student is to watch his/her technique. Is not this the point of the practice? What is secondary is removed. Such is the way of Zen.

After a while, a student's gi and belt become rather worn looking. The seams are worn by abrasion and constant washing. Parts of the gi may be discolored by constant sweat from vigorous workouts. The belt may be quite ragged from being tied and untied, and from being tugged on. The gi, which looked perfect when it was taken out of its plastic bag, soon looks imperfect.

Of course, every student is expected to keep his/her uniform scrupulously clean. If a tear develops, it is perfectly all right to patch it with the same material. One's belt, however, is never washed. Every class you take, every drop of sweat, every little tear or abrasion is part of what goes into each student's unique experience of the martial arts. It is something to be remembered, but not clung to. Therefore, no experience is washed away. The belt must tell its own story, as does the uniform. The uniform must be perfectly clean and sanitary at all times, but it also will show its wear and imperfections, which are unique to the student. This is called *sabi*, another aesthetic value from Zen.

An example of *Sabi* is the tea ceremony. The host serves the guest's tea in a pottery teacup that he chooses and keeps specially for that purpose. These cups are beautiful works of the potter's hand. Each one is unique, which means, per force, that each one is imperfect. Usually, one dimension may not be perfectly round, the height might not be the same all around, or the glaze might have been applied unevenly. When the guest has sipped the tea, he or she holds the cup up and examines it. It is part of the custom that the guest express admiration for the cup, commenting on some unusual characteristic and noting its uniqueness. The host is commended on his/her taste and refinement in choosing the cup. This is the origin of *sabi*.

Your gi is unique and personal. It is made into a beautiful object only through its use in the process of training and self-improvement. This is something the student, in turn, respects by taking care of his uniform and keeping it neat and clean.

## Daily Schedule and Diet

The keys to successful and enjoyable training are **persistence** and **balance**. Beginners, with their unbridled enthusiasm, train strenuously every day and soon become tired, frustrated or injured. Senior students often focus on a narrow range of skills, e.g., too much free fighting, or too much strength training exclusively. A good individual program, developed in conjunction with an instructor who knows your goals and abilities, should follow some basic principles.

### 1. Follow a Program That You Can Maintain

Three times a week is a good basic schedule for karate training, either in class or on your own. Leave one day in between for joints and muscles to rest. On the off day, you may decide to do something that is fitness related (bicycling, running, lifting weights). However, it is good not to stress the same muscle groups in the same way two days in a row. The off-day principle allows for recovery and it helps to sustain mental interest and to prevent "burnout," or boredom with training.

### 2. Use a Variety of Training Techniques

The foundations of karate Zen are the stances, blocks, punches, kicks, and breathing. These should be reviewed, if only lightly, on a daily basis. Stances can be used as leg-strengthening exercises.

Running is good for aerobic fitness, but long, slow distances on hard surfaces are destructive to the knees and develop the leg muscles in an unbalanced way. Swimming can be used as an aerobic supplement to karate training. For business people who travel, a jump rope can be used in a hotel room for aerobic conditioning. Dance or aerobic exercise classes can be used to improve rhythm and coordination. Racquet sports can improve agility and help eye-hand coordination. Remember, use every fitness opportunity to help some aspect of your karate training: cardiovascular fitness, strength, flexibility, technique.

### **3. Do Zazen Daily**

Sit every day, if only for ten minutes at a time. It is not necessary for students to sit only when they can do so for forty-five minutes at a time, as in a *sesshin*. Daily practice is the key; the duration will equilibrate itself. The best times to do zazen are dawn and twilight.

A nutritious, balanced diet is necessary in order to lead a healthy, productive life. There are many special diet plans, which all have their advocates: macrobiotic, high protein, high carbohydrate, low salt, low calorie. These may work well for particular individuals, but it is recommended that you develop a diet plan for yourself, using certain principles, discussed below.

#### **1. Get Enough Calories to Take Care of Your Energy Requirements**

Many karate students work full time, train and also go to school. With this life style, you need a minimum caloric intake in order to maintain energy and alertness. Do not try to lose weight, for example by restricting your total caloric intake to unrealistically low levels.

#### **2. Watch the Source of Your Calories**

Avoid the mania for proteins. Americans have too high an intake of proteins in general, when compared with diets in other cultures. There is no evidence to show that excess consumption of protein goes into building muscles. Digestion and elimination of excess protein is a strain on the kidneys and causes a variety of disorders. While meat protein is high quality, try to avoid too much red meat, particularly very well-marbled meats with too much fatty content. Lean meats such as chicken and veal are preferable. Vegetable proteins can be combined to give a complete, cost-efficient protein. Beans and rice, for example, can yield a complete protein, with the right proportions of all the required amino acids.

As a general rule, try to get as few of your calories as possible from fats, particularly saturated fats. The consensus is that Americans get too much of their energy requirements from fats, which is related to the very high incidences of obesity and heart disease. Watch your cholesterol levels, including the distribution of HDL and LDL levels. Avoid fried foods, trim excess fats away from meats, avoid bacon, and try to reduce consumption of saturated oils. There is some evidence now that the monosaturated oils, such as olive and peanut oils, are good for reducing the risk of heart disease.

#### **3. Eliminate Empty Calories**

Simple sugars (white sugar, brown sugar, honey) are to be avoided wherever possible. This will be a boon to your weight as well as good for your health, as these simple sugars are not nutritionally useful ways of getting energy. In addition, they give you a temporary lift followed by a sugar depression. Donuts, danishes, candies, sweet rolls and other easily accessible junk foods can and should be eliminated from the everyday diet.

#### **4. Get Plenty of Fiber**

Whole-grain breads, cereals and fresh fruits, such as apples, are good sources of dietary fiber and bulk. In addition to aiding elimination and digestion, there is some evidence that fiber may contribute to the prevention of certain kinds of cancers of the colon and intestine.

#### **5. Eat a Variety of Foods**

The safest protection against any nutritional imbalance or deficiency is to eat a variety of foods. Every day try to eat some foods from every major group: meat and fish; whole grains and legumes; dark green and leafy vegetables; essential oils; eggs and dairy products.

#### **6. Drink Plenty of Water Daily**

Drink at least six to eight glasses of pure, fresh water daily. This aids in carrying away toxins and waste materials from the blood. In addition, it helps to lubricate the joints as well as to fill the stomach around meal times so you may be inclined to eat less. There is no evidence that bottled waters or spring waters are any more beneficial than tap water. Check with your public health department or college extension service to find out about local characteristics of the drinking water.

#### **7. Take a Vitamin/Mineral Supplement as Required**

Current public health statements contend that the average American has no need for a vitamin/mineral supplement, given the nature and amount of his food intake. The problem is that the typical karate student does not eat as much or as well as the “average American” and has more physical demands on the body. Use a balanced formula when you are training heavily, under a great deal of stress or when the weather is very hot. Avoid prolonged megadoses of vitamins, which can be chronically or acutely toxic.



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## WARMING UP, STRETCHING & CALISTHENIC EXERCISES

Warming up for karate practice has two basic components:

1. An aerobic phase, aimed at elevating the heart rate and raising the body's core temperature.
2. A stretching phase, aimed at working the joints to maintain and improve the range of motion, as well as static stretching.

Certain basic principles will be discussed, and these should be borne in mind whenever exercising. These principles are consistent with modern mainstream thinking in the fields of exercise and physiology. The warmup exercises pictured in this chapter are, however, specific to karate. Hence, they have an effect on karate practice in addition to their effect on overall fitness and well being. These exercises have been developed and practiced over many, many years, and they have proven safe and effective when done properly. A beginner should always study under the eye of a certified karate instructor, paying close attention to the form of the exercises and to the general principles.

### General Principles

#### 1. Always Warm Up Before Stretching

The idea is to raise the heart rate above the resting rate and to bring blood to all the major muscle groups. Try to get a slight sweat going **before** you stretch. This is a tangible sign of the body's preparedness for stretching. Visualize trying to stretch a dry sponge. It will tear and break rather than yield. This is a good analogy for what happens when you try to stretch, for example, after eight hours sitting at a desk—when the blood has pooled in the extremities and the lower back is compressed. This principle applies to runners and players of racquet sports as well as to karate students.

#### 2. Be Aware

When stretching, be aware of which muscles are being stretched. Involve these muscles. Relax. Avoid involving other muscle groups in the stretch.

#### 3. Breathe!

Maintain slow, controlled breathing when stretching. Do not hold your breath, and don't huff and puff trying to force your body into a deeper stretch. Exhale on downward movements and blow all the air out of your lungs.

#### 4. Don't Bounce.

Bouncing in a stretched position induces what's called "the stretch reflex," where the muscle actually contracts as a protective mechanism against being overstretched. These contractions negate the objective we are pursuing. Hold your best position for 10 to 30 seconds and feel the muscle actually

lengthening. Be aware of the difference between this feeling and the pulling of a muscle at the insertion, or the pulling of a tendon. Stop if you feel real discomfort.

## **5. Good Form**

This is a key. It is much more important than whether or not you can force your chest to the floor in a side split by rounding your lower back, for example. Use the pictures in this book to see what constitutes good form. Strive for this, and do not take shortcuts.

## **6. Avoid Extreme Ranges of Motions**

Do not forcibly “lock” the joints when doing either calisthenic or static stretching exercises. Joints are not meant to bear loads unsupported by the muscles.

## **7. Strike a Balance Between Stretching and Strengthening**

Stretching can be overdone. Certain advanced students of yoga, for example, are so “stretched out” that their shoulders go spontaneously out of joint when making simple movements. We want to develop and maintain flexibility, but we also want muscles to be strong for the following reasons:

- (1) Muscles support the internal organs, bear the body’s weight and help us to fight the effects of gravity.
- (2) Muscles must be strong to do work in moving us around.
- (3) Muscles help us to lift loads.
- (4) When we find ourselves in emergencies, bursts of muscular exertion are often required.
- (5) Strong, well-toned muscles contribute to a better enjoyment of life and, by contributing to body balance, help us to dissipate stress.

## **8. “No Pain, No Gain?”**

Much abusive training and many unsound exercises have been developed by invoking this principle. It misstates the kernel of a valuable principle that might be restated, “No Challenge, No Growth,” or “No Stress, No Training.” If there is no training, there is no point to our exercises, and they become like a dance.

Suppose, for example, that you have an excellent stretch in a side-split position. You may do this stretch every day, but it will have no training effect. If you have a good stretch, then you must aim for perfect form or for an advanced variation. To merely keep your effort in the range of absolute comfort induces no response from the mind or the body. Human beings have enormous potential to improve physical performance by training the body **and** the mind. To train, however, means to push up against a limit. This must involve effort and a degree of discomfort. If it **hurts**, stop and check what you are doing. If, on the other hand, what you are doing is totally comfortable, you may not be training really well.

## **Exercises**

### **Jumping Jacks**

This is an excellent exercise for the aerobic phase. It requires no equipment or assistance, and it helps develop coordination.

1. Try to stay on the balls of your feet.
2. Keep the knees slightly bent. Do not lock them out.



3. Relax the arms and keep a wide range of motion with them.

### **Knee Rotation**

This is a range-of-motion exercise, and it is also aimed at stretching the bands on the sides of the joint.

1. The feet are together and do not move.
2. The knees are bent and remain so.
3. Go slowly and try to move in as wide a circle as possible.
4. Do not put pressure on the knees with the hands.

### **Single Leg Stretch for Back of Legs**

#### **(Hurdler's Stretch)**

This derives its name from the fact that the position is that of a runner jumping a hurdle, with the front leg extended and the trailing leg bent and tucked behind. This is a difficult stretch to do properly.

1. Flex the foot of the extended leg and relax the quadricep.
2. Sit up straight, with no slump in the lumbar spine.
3. Tuck the bent leg back, bringing the heel of the foot in toward the buttocks. Relax the foot.
4. Exhale. Bend slowly down over the extended leg. Do not involve the upper back or arms. Relax the lower back. Feel the stretch in the hamstring muscle.
5. This exercise can create stress in the knee of the bent leg, usually on the inside of the knee. If this is the case, do a variant of this stretch: Keep the sole of the foot (bent leg) on the inside of the thigh (extended leg). Bend over and stretch over the extended leg in the same manner.

### **BASIC JUMPING JACKS**

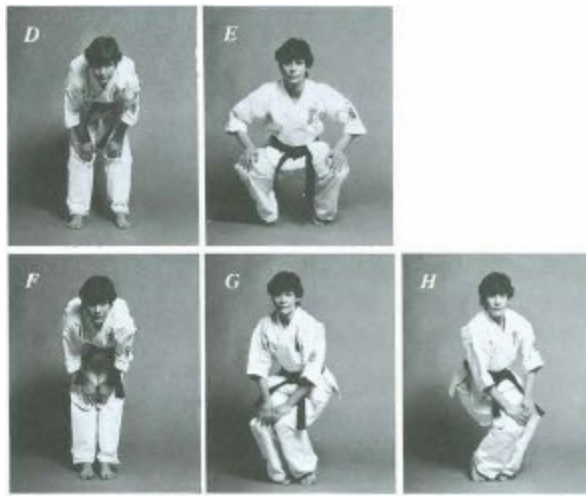


*A* Starting position

*B* Jump with legs apart and arms swinging out and over your head.

*C* Finishing position, then jump and return to start position.

### **KNEE EXERCISES**



### 1. Knee bends

*D* Starting position: feet shoulder width apart and both hands on your knees.

*E* Squat down and return to starting position.

### 2. Knee Rotations

*F* Put feet together and straighten your legs.

*G* With hands on knees begin to squat and circle in a counterclockwise direction.

*H* Then reverse direction.

## THIGH STRETCH



*I* Spread your legs wider than your shoulders then lunge to one side while the other leg remains straight.

*J* Continue to lunge and lower hips toward bent knee.

*K* Twist hips in so the back leg is bent and most weight is on the leg near the chest.

6. Do not hold your breath. Hold the stretch for 10 to 30 seconds.

### Straight Leg Stretch

This is a basic exercise used in dance and gymnastics, and it is very useful for karate practice. The primary focus is on stretching the groin muscles, with secondary emphasis on relaxing the lower lumbar areas of the back.

1. Start with as wide a split as possible. Relax.

2. Keep the back erect. In particular, guard against the lumbar spine rounding outward. Think of someone pulling up on your head with a string.

3. Keep the feet perpendicular to the floor. Do not let them rotate inward when you go down. Feet are flexed.

4. Keep the back flat. Reach out with the arms. Keep the shoulders down. Relax the lower back. Breathe out when you stretch forward.

### Sitting Stretch

This stretch is for the groin and for the muscles in the upper part of the thigh, going into the buttocks.

1. Put the soles of the feet together, bringing them in as far as possible toward the groin. Lightly hold on to the toes.

2. Relax the lower back. Press the thighs down.

3. At the same time, pull on the feet and try to bring the chest down toward your feet. Exhale fully as you do this.
4. Hold your best position for 10 to 30 seconds.

## **Hip Exercise**

This exercise aims to improve the rotation of the leg/hip joint, which is necessary for effective kicking and for good mobility in karate.

1. Start with your legs as wide apart as is comfortably possible, with the feet pointing outward.
2. Bring your toes in towards each other, while at the same time, bending forward from the waist.
3. Bring your heels in, while at the same time straightening up and leaning back slightly.
4. Continue alternating the same movements of the feet until the feet come together.

## **Neck**

The neck supports the head, a rather large object, weighing from 12 to 14 pounds! Do not make movements by throwing the head around or by using the momentum of the head. Go slowly.

1. Keep the shoulders down and relaxed.
2. Keep the eyes open, following the motion of the head.
3. When the head is forward, feel the muscles at the back of neck stretching.
4. When the head is back, feel the muscles at the front of the neck stretching.

## **Gassho**

This is an isometric exercise aimed at the muscles on the underside of the arms, and secondarily the pectoral muscles.

1. Try to maintain a constant pressure with the palms throughout.
2. As the hands move closer, toward the center of the chest, be aware of the changing focus of tension.

## **Finger Tips**

This exercise is very specific to karate.

1. Relax the shoulders.
2. Try to keep even pressure on **all** the fingers.

## **Wrist Rotation**

This is a range-of-motion exercise, aimed at maintaining mobility and flexibility in the wrist joint.

1. Try to move the wrist through as wide a circle as possible.
2. Use the other hand to guide the wrist, but not to exert undue pressure.

## **Push-ups**

They are a great all-around strength builder, and they can be done with many variations, to increase difficulty and to stress different muscle groups. Basically, push-ups build up the triceps, the upper back, the chest, the front of the shoulders and, secondarily, the abdominals and the leg and back muscles. Quite a complete strengthening exercise!

Push-ups can be done with hands open, or with your fists (which helps to condition the wrists and the knuckles), or on your fingertips (which helps to develop the grip).

1. Close each fist tightly, and stay on the first two knuckles only.

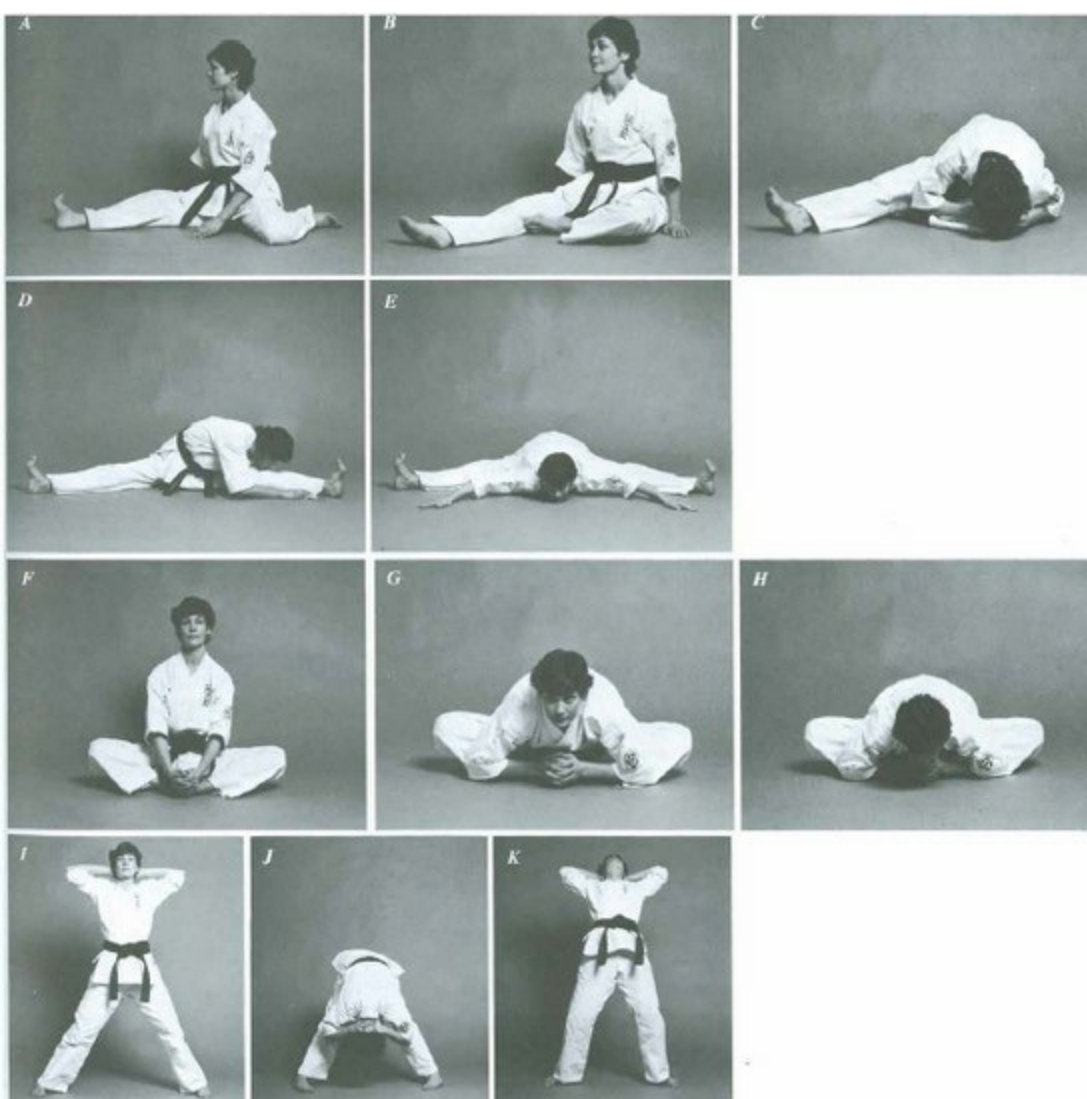
2. Keep the weight of the body over the fists and not slanted back. Tighten the abdomen, and raise the buttocks slightly to take stress off the lower back.
3. Keep the arms in toward the body. Let the arms rub, if possible, on the side of the chest. This keeps the focus on the triceps.
4. Keep the legs straight by using the quadriceps.
5. Lower the body slowly while exhaling.
6. Stop about three inches away from the ground; inhale.
7. Exhale while pushing the body up. Get as full a range of motion as possible, but do not “lock out” the arms at the top of the push-up.
8. Vary the routine. Sometimes do sets with high repetitions, sacrificing range of motion for repetitions; other times, concentrate on form, control of the body going down and up, and on breathing.
9. A wider spacing of the fists shifts the focus from the triceps to the upper back and outer portion of the shoulders.

### **Sit-ups**

Strong abdominal muscles are very important to general well being. They are the most powerful muscle group in the body, but perhaps the most difficult to actively engage in exercise. The classic high school gym class sit-up, with legs extended straight in front and someone holding your ankles, is really destructive to the lower back; in addition, it does not put stress on the abdominals alone.

1. Feet are flat on the floor and the knees bent up.
2. Hands are on your ears, in order to eliminate the arms as a source of momentum up and down. If you put your hands behind your head, do not **pull** on your neck to get leverage, as this damages the cervical vertebrae.
3. Roll up, starting with the neck, tucking it into the chest. Feel the abdominal muscles being squeezed and contracting to lift the shoulders off the floor. You do not have to come up too far. Beyond a certain point, the abdominals actually stop working.
4. Roll back down the same way, using the abdominal muscles to make the descent very slow.
5. Do not rest on the floor before coming back up. Instead, lightly touch the spine to the floor, and then begin sitting (rolling) up again. This keeps the stress on the muscles.
6. Fewer repetitions with proper form are much more valuable than hundreds with the wrong form.

### **SINGLE LEG STRETCH FOR BACK OF LEGS.**



*A* Sit with one leg straight and other leg bent behind you. Grab your foot and pull your chest and head down toward your knee.

*B* Sit with one leg straight and one leg bent with foot on side of the knee.

*C* Bend slowly toward bent knee and touch your nose to your knee.

### **STRAIGHT LEG STRETCH**

*D* Spread both legs as far to the sides as possible. Then alternating legs try and touch your nose to each knee.

*E* Relax and bend forward from the hips lowering your chest and head as close to the floor as possible. Try and stay in this position 30 seconds.

### **SITTING STRETCH**

*F* Sit on the floor with both legs bent and feet together.

*G* Grab your feet and begin to pull your chest toward your feet.

*H* Finish position your chin touches your feet.

### **HIP EXERCISE**

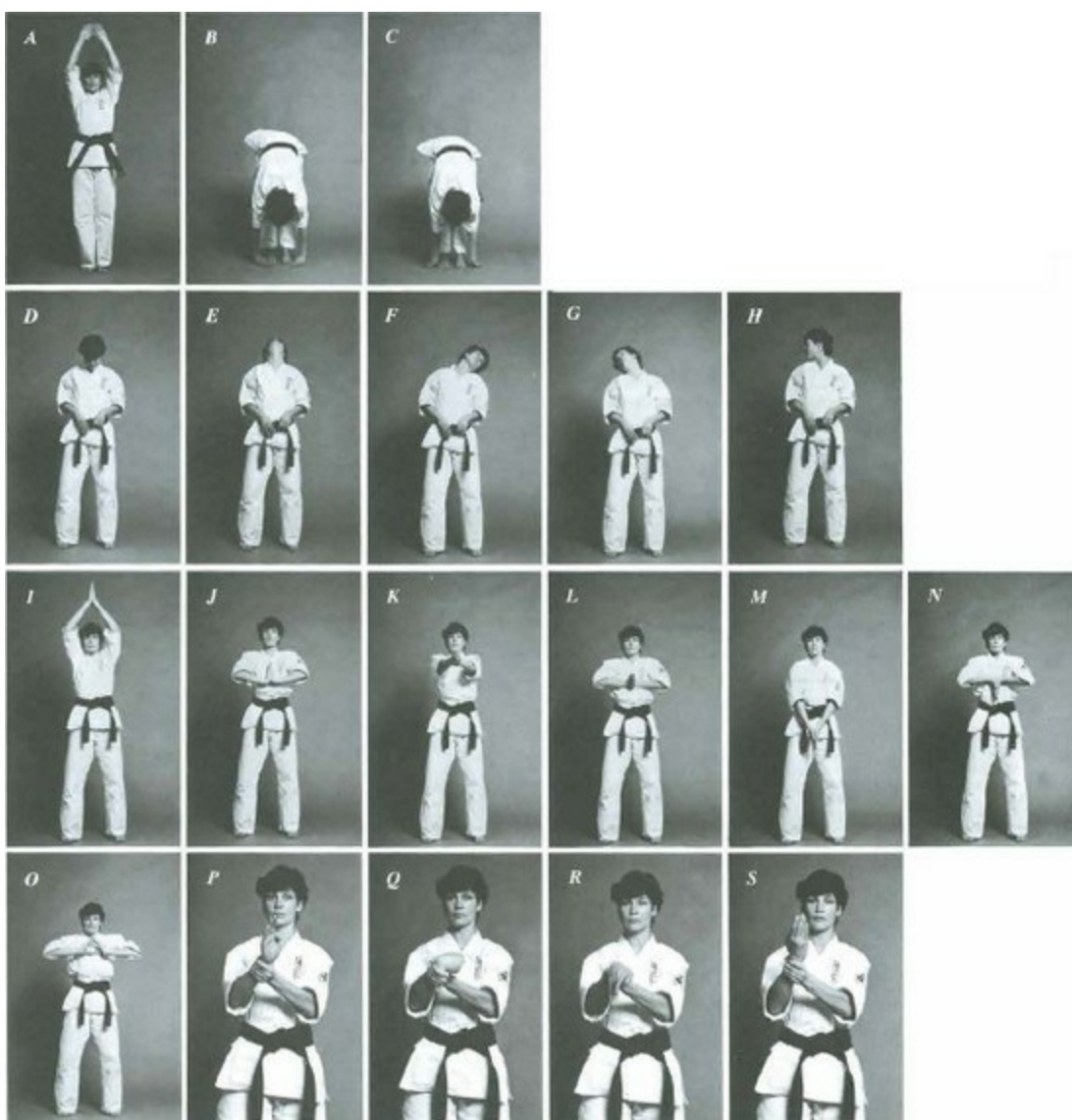
*I* Spread legs apart, with hands behind your head.

*J* Bend forward from the waist, almost touching your elbows to your knees. At the same time turn your toes inward.

*K* Return almost to start position but lean backward with your heels pulling in.

### **HAMSTRING EXERCISE**





- A* Stand with feet together with hands over your head.
- B* Bend from the waist and touch the palms of your hands to the floor near front of feet.
- C* Variation exercise is to twist hands around and touch pal near back of feet.
- D* Move your head forward.
- E* Backward.
- F* Around in a circle counterclockwise...
- G* ...then clockwise
- H* Also from side to side.

### **GASSHO (Pressing palms together)**

- I* Stand with feet shoulder width, hands over head, palms together.
- J* Pressing palms together, lower hands in front of your chest.
- K* Second part is with arms extended out in front of you.
- L* Draw them in to your chest while pressing them together.
- M* Third part is with fingers pointed toward the floor.
- N* Draw them up to your chest with fingers still pointing toward the floor, pressing them together.
- O* Picture shows pressing fingers together. This exercise helps to develop a good grip.

## WRIST EXERCISE

**P** Hold your wrist with one hand and keep other hand open.

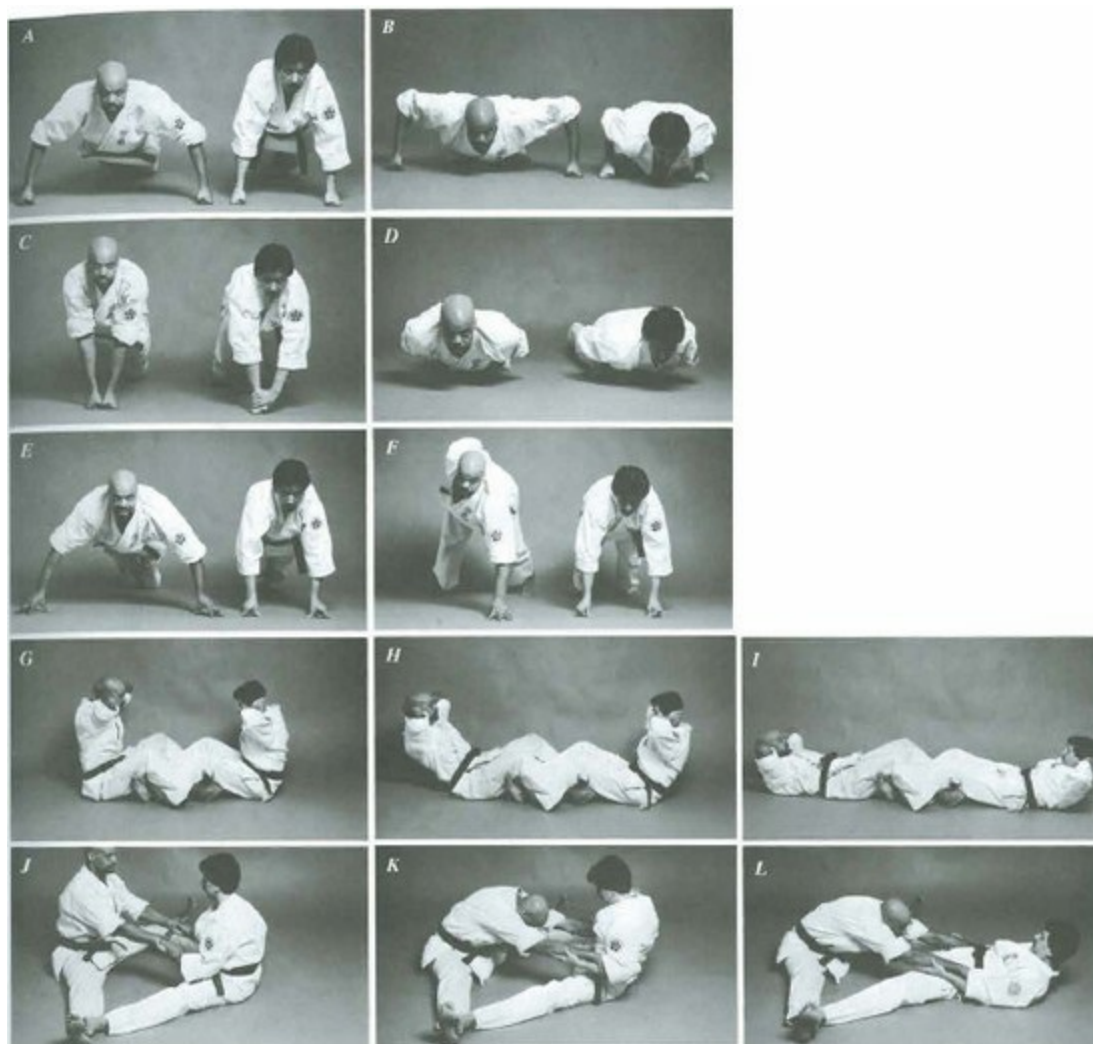
**Q** Turn wrist in toward you.

**R** Turn wrist downward.

**S** And upward.

All these movements are aimed to maintain mobility and flexibility in the wrist joint.

## PUSH-UP



**A** Wide push-up position and shoulder width position with the first two knuckles.

**B** Down position. Note how elbows are kept in by student on the right in the shoulder width push-up.

**C** Two variations.

**D** Down position with fists together and one fist.

**E** Wide push-up position with fingertips and two finger pushup position.

**F** One hand fingertip position and one finger on both hands position.

## SIT-UPS

**G** Starting position.

**H** Slowly lean backward, keeping your head in near your chest.

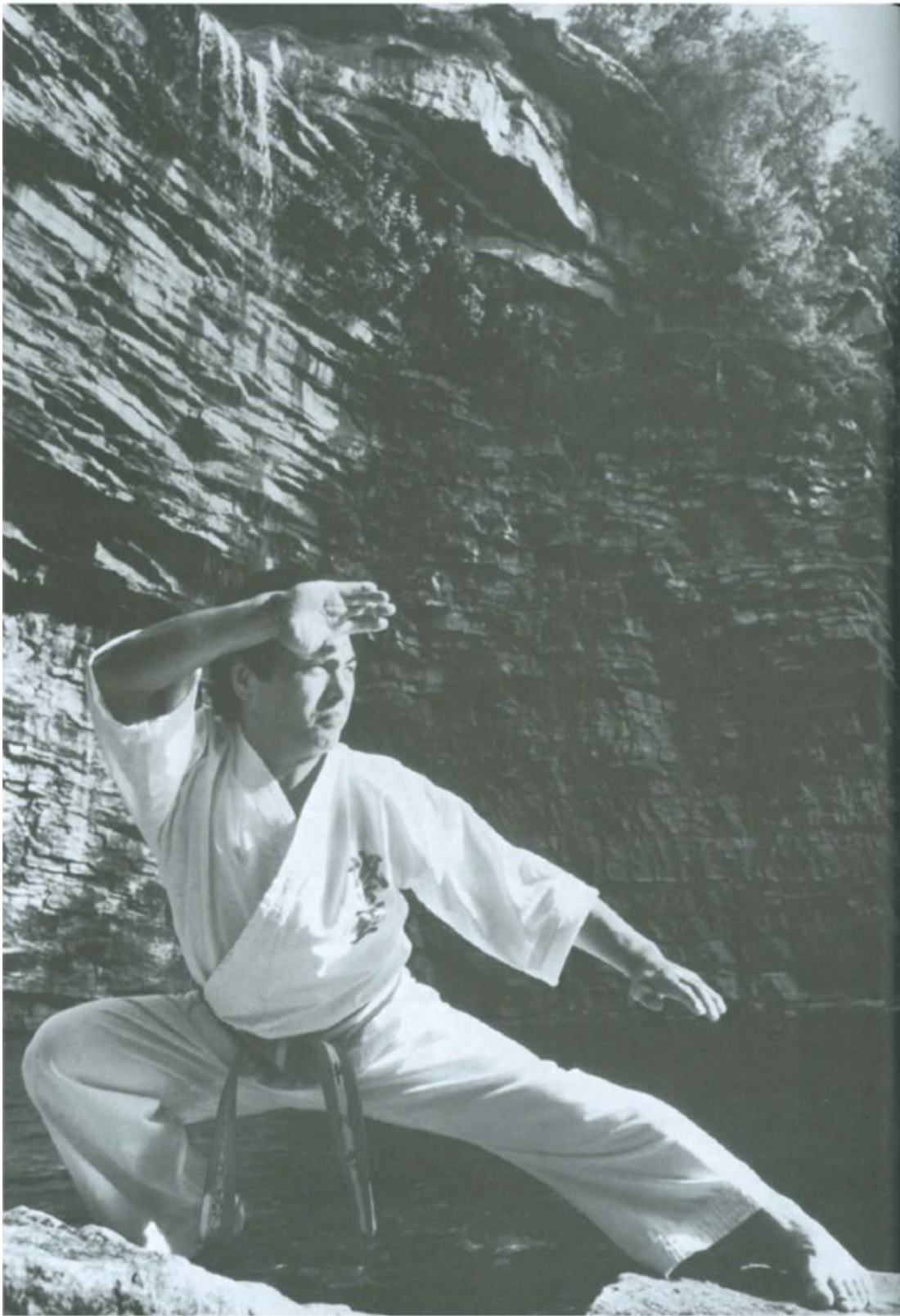
**I** Finish position touching your back to the floor and returning to starting position.

## **BUDDY STRETCH**

***J*** Both partners spread their legs as wide as possible, with one partner's legs inside. Grab partner's wrists.

***K*** One partner starts to lean back while pulling the other person forward.

***L*** Finish position is when person pulling has touched his back to the floor and other person is forward as much as possible.



## POSTURES AND STANCES



### **TACHI SAN NEN (To learn to stand properly takes three years)**

When babies learn to stand, they don't learn from a book. We all learned to stand by direct experience, through trial and error. We probably held on to a table leg or chair and fell on our rumps many times. One day, after lots of trials, we stood, perhaps with some wobbling, on our own two feet. Babies stand in an easy, natural and stable way. Look how they stand: They seem to be centered in the lower body, with belly relaxed and full of air. Their shoulders, arms and head are light and free.

As adults, our posture deteriorates, perhaps because of physical infirmity. More often, our posture suffers from the imprisoning and debilitating effects of the ego, the "small i," the self.

Postures and stances are the bedrock of karate practice. When engineers begin building a suspension bridge, to connect two points of land by soaring over water, they begin by sinking foundations for the towers that must support the bridge. Similarly, in karate, practice of basic stances is emphasized. The legs and the hips must support the body weight in a way that is stable, supple and centered. It takes three years, as the saying goes, to learn how to stand properly in karate.

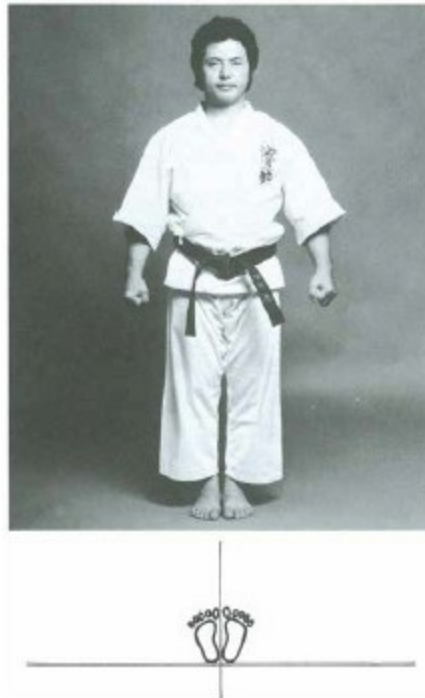
### **Basic Principles**

1. Stances must be practiced in the same way that kicks, blocks and punches are practiced.
2. Stances have different attributes. Some are flexible, some are transitional (leading to another movement), and some are fixed, or "rooted."
3. All stances require:
  - (a) a dropping of the shoulders;
  - (b) maintenance of breath and tension in the *seika tanden*;
  - (c) keeping the center of gravity in the hips;
  - (d) proper distribution of weight between the legs.

When free fighting, the body naturally assumes many different positions, depending on whether we are in an offensive, defensive or transitional situation. The many formal stances in this chapter are a distillation of useful positions that can be applied later in the dynamic context of free fighting.



The pictures in this chapter are very helpful for the practice of stances. Look at the model and check the attributes of this stance against yours, using a long mirror. You will have to make some small adjustments to suit your own physical characteristics, but check the text to make sure that you maintain the basic character of each stance.



**HEISOKU DACHI (Closed-toe stance)**

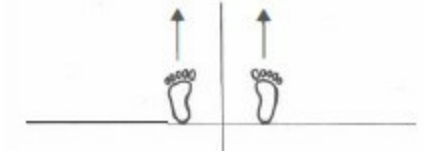
Weight is distributed 50/50 between both legs. Both feet parallel with heels and toes together.



**MUSUBI DACHI (Open-toe stance)**

Same weight distribution. Heels are together and each foot is 45°.





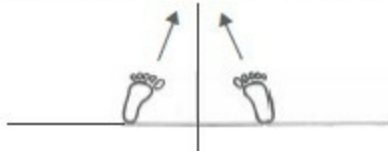
**HEIKO DACHI (Parallel stance)**

Feet are pointing straight ahead, approximately shoulder width apart. Weight distribution is 50/ 50.

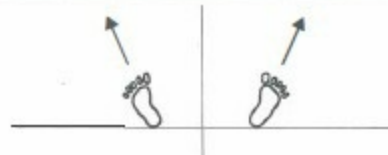


**KIBA DACHI (Straddle stance)**

Weight distribution is 50/50. Knees are pushed out over the feet, as much as possible. Feet are parallel. Keep your back as straight as possible. Align your ears with your hips in the same vertical line.



**UCHI HACHIJI DACHI (Inverted open leg stance)**  
Weight distribution is 50/50, with heels out and toes pointed in.

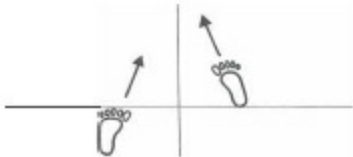


**FUDO DACHI (Normal stance)**  
Feet are shoulder width apart, and toes are each at approximately a 30° angle. Weight is evenly distributed.



**SHIKO DACHI (Sumo stance)**

Similar to kiba dachi, except the feet are both turned outward. Weight is evenly distributed.



**SANCHIN DACHI (Three-point stance)**

Right foot is staggered in front of the left, heels are twisted out. The knees are slightly bent. Weight is 50/50. (Right sanchin illustrated)





**ZENKUTSU DACHI (Front leaning stance)**

(Front view) Weight is 70% on the front leg and 30% on back leg. Feet are shoulder width apart. On the front leg, the knee is directly over the ankle. Back leg is straight, and the foot is at a 45° angle.

(Side view) The length of the stance is approximately two shoulder widths.



**KOKUTSU DACHI (Back leaning stance)**

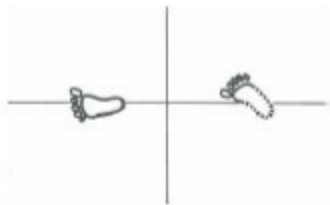
(Front view) 70% of the weight is on the back leg and 30% on the front leg. Make sure to keep your feet shoulder width apart and not directly behind each other. Hips are lowered, and you feel like you are “sitting” on your back leg. Heel of the front leg is up, enabling you to kick quickly with the front leg. Body is twisted, so as not to expose the central weak points of the body. (Side view) As illustrated, the hands in this stance are in a basic fighting position.



**SAGI ASHI DACHI (One legged stance)**

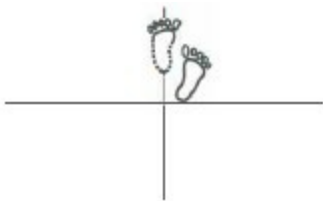
This is an advanced stance, sometimes used to execute a quick joint kick or side kick. 100% of weight is on the right leg, with the knee

slightly bent, and the instep of the left foot is hooked behind the knee.



**KATA HIZASHI DACHI(One knee stance)**

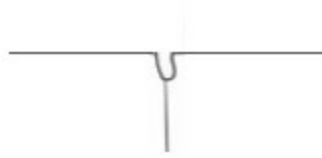
Both feet are approximately in one line, and most of the weight is on the one knee. Stay on the ball of the foot on the back leg. (Right stance illustrated)



(Front view) Like the back leaning stance, most of the weight is on the back leg, 90% of the weight in this stance. The front foot is pulled in toward the back foot, about one foot length away. (Side view) Both knees are bent, and the hips are pushed back.

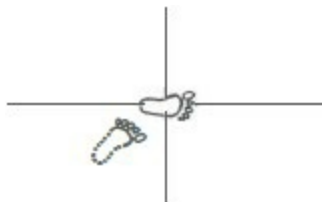






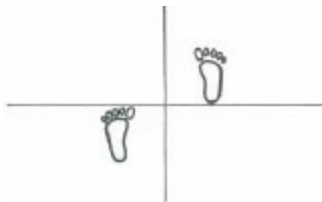
**TSURUASHI DACHI (Crane stance)**

This stance is similar to sagi ashi dachi. The foot of the raised leg is kept at the side of the knee, instead of being hooked around the knee. The leg which supports the weight is almost straight.



**KAKE DACHI (Hooked stance)**

Right knee is slightly bent, and the left foot has stepped behind, heel up, on the ball of the foot, Hips are lowered and the back is straight. This stance is used to make quick transitions, such as moving in close to an opponent without exposing the center of the body.



**KUZURE HEIKO DACHI (Staggered parallel stance)**

Like the parallel stance, except the one foot is in front of the other.



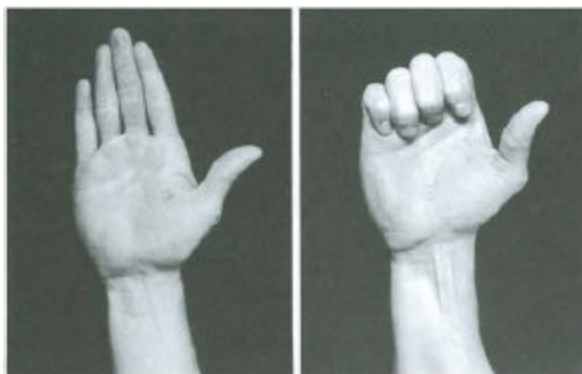
## NATURAL WEAPONS

Since karate means “empty hand,” this martial art employs many parts of the body as natural weapons. In this chapter, the natural weapons are illustrated, and explanations are given for their use.

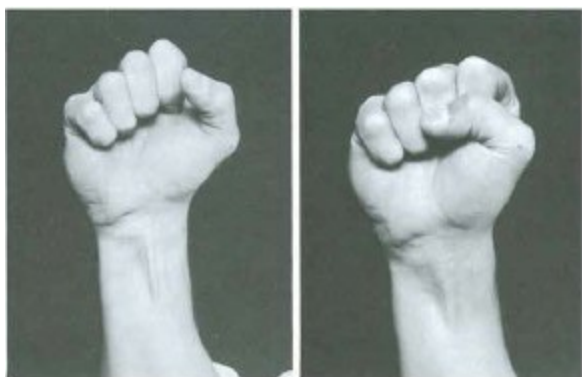
Proper use of the natural weapons requires that the student condition and strengthen the area to be used gradually. Proper use of the feet, for example, demands that the toes be flexible and the ankles strong. Push-ups are used to strengthen the fingers, wrists and knuckles, all of which are used as the photographs show. Students are cautioned to develop some basic strength in the weapons first (see Chapter 3) and then to practice with a heavy bag, pad or *makiwara* board, under supervision.

### Hands

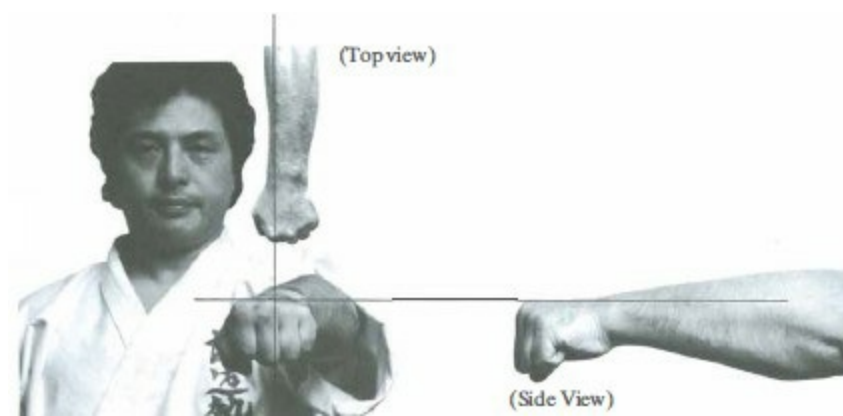
#### MAKING A FIST



Start with the hand open. Starting with the pinkie, fold your fingers down to the top of the palm of the hand.



Continue to turn the fingers in, until you can no longer see your fingernails. Tuck the thumb over the fingers and close the fist tight.



### **SEI KEN (Straight on view of fist)**

Use the first two knuckles when striking with forefist.



### **IPPON KEN (Forefinger fist)**

Keep the fist tight, but keep the second joint of the index finger exposed. Support the index finger with the thumb.



### **NAKADAKA KEN (Middle finger fist)**

Use the middle finger to strike, keeping the fist tight.



### **HIRA KEN**

Here, you are striking with the second joints of four fingers. Tuck the thumb in.



### **TATE KEN (Vertical fist)**

Strike with the first two knuckles. Fist is in a vertical position.



### **TETTSUI (Hammer fist)**

The striking surface is the side of the fist between the knuckles and the wrist. The fist is closed tight.



### **URAKEN (Inverted fist)**

The striking surface is the back part of the first two knuckles.



Illustration of inverted fist to the face





Master Nakamura breaking a stone with a downward knife hand strike. More than just power is required for this kind of highly advanced break. The mind must be empty (Mushin) of all thoughts except the problem at hand. The karate-ka must 'become one' with the material

and summon up all his physical, mental and spiritual resources.



**SHUTO (Knife hand)**

The striking area is from above the wrist to the middle of the palm. Fingers are together, and the thumb is tucked in.



**HAITO (Inner knife hand)**

The striking area is from the second joint of the index finger to the wrist. The thumb is tucked into the palm of the hand, away from the striking surface.

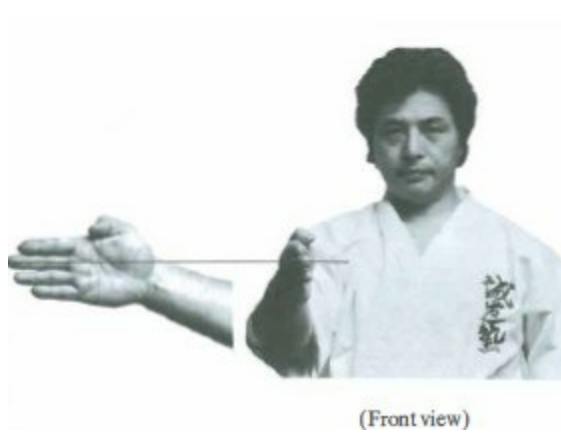


**SHOTEI (Palm heel)**

Use the heel, or lower part of the palm. Fingers are together. Thumb is tucked in, and the wrist is bent back slightly.

Use of palm heel striking to the opponent's chin.





### **NUKITE (Spear hand)**

The tips of the fingers are the weapon. Fingers together and the thumb is tucked in.



### **IPPON NUKITE (One finger spear hand)**

Use the tip of the index finger for the weapon.



### **NIHON NUKITE (Two finger spear hand)**

Use the index and middle fingers as weapons.



### **TOHO (Sword peak hand)**

Use the area from the tip of the index finger to the tip of the thumb.

Using toho to strike to the opponent's throat. Squeeze the windpipe with the thumb and index finger.



### **KEIKO (Chicken beak hand)**

Put all five fingers together, using the tips of all the fingers as the weapon.

Using keiko to the side of the head.



### **KUMADE (Bear hand)**

Again the tips of all five fingers are the weapon, covering a wide area. After striking, you can rip or tear the skin.

Using the bear hand to the side of the face.



### **HIRATE (Open hand)**

The whole inside of the hand is the weapon. Thumb is tucked in.

Hirate can be effectively used to the ear.



### **HAISHU (Back of the hand)**

The entire back part of the hand is the weapon.

Haishu is effective to the side of the ear.



### **KOKEN (Wrist)**

With hand turned down, expose the top of the wrist, which is the natural weapon. Striking with koken to the side of the jaw.



### **UCHI KOTE (Inside of forearm)/ SOTO KOTE (Outside forearm)**

Both surfaces of the forearm, from the wrist to the elbow are weapons.

Uchi kote striking to the jaw and neck area.



### **HIJI (Elbow)**

Use the tip of the elbow as the weapon.

Using the tip of the elbow to strike to to the jaw.





### **ATAMA (Head)**

If an opponent grabs you from behind, you can thrust the back of the head to the opponent's nose.

Using the back of the head.

## **Feet and Legs**



### **CHUSOKU (Ball of foot)**

Striking area is just underneath the toes. Pull the toes back to expose the ball of the foot.

A front kick, using chusoku, to the stomach area.



### **HAISOKU (Instep)**

Point the foot and turn the toes down, exposing the instep.

Using haisoku to kick to the groin.



### **TEISOKU (Sole of the foot)**

Using teisoku to stop an opponent back kick by pushing off.



**TSUMA SAKI (Toe tips)**  
Striking the stomach area.



**SOKUTO (Knife foot)**  
Pull the big toe up and point the other toes down. Flex the ankle and turn the foot in. The outer edge of the foot is the weapon.

A kick to the knee joint using sokuto.



**KAKATO (Heel)**  
Flex the foot to expose the bottom or flat part of the heel.

Using the bottom of the heel to stamp an opponent's face.



**USHIRO KAKATO (Back of the heel)**  
Flex the foot to expose the bony part (back) of the heel.

A rising strike, with back of the heel, going to the groin area.



**HIZA (Knee)**

Using the top of the knee, pulling the opponent down and striking the head. Note the toes of the kicking leg are pointed down.



## HAND AND ARM TECHNIQUES

Hand and arm techniques can be fast and powerful. Snapping techniques, using an inverted fist, for example, are extremely quick and useful in selfdefense situations. Thrusting techniques, such as those using the forefist, can be extremely powerful if hip rotation is used effectively. Hand and arm techniques can be used in multiple combination by students of average agility and coordination. Since very few people are naturally ambidextrous, the student should remember to try and develop the weaker arm, so as to maintain an overall balance between right and left sides. It is also important to remember to keep the shoulders and neck area relaxed at all times, as tension in these areas negates the speed and effectiveness of hand techniques.

Hand and arm techniques generally require a closer distance to the opponent than do leg techniques. Hand and arm techniques derive their power from the translation of angular momentum in the hips, transferred through the waist and abdomen, into linear momentum. Students are encouraged to do trunk twisting exercises to develop flexibility at the waist; sit-ups will strengthen the abdominals. Attention to these areas will increase the effectiveness of hand and arm techniques.



**“Nigiri San Nen, Tachi San Nen, Tsuki San Nen.”**

The simplest actions, which we might take for granted, take a long time to perfect and to understand. According to the oldest martial arts traditions, to make a tight fist takes three years. When we have learned this, we must understand how to balance our weight and to maintain our posture in a relaxed but ready position. This takes another three years. Finally, with another three years of practice, we

can learn how to strike properly. Striking properly requires a strong foundation, a firm striking surface, proper transfer of weight, and application of hip rotation. Actually, these are very advanced concepts. They can only be mastered by repetition of the most basic elements, which, according to tradition, takes nine years.

Our modern society, particularly through the electronic media and advertising, teaches us to expect instant mastery and gratification. Simply by taking a certain number of lessons, we are told, we can master a skilled art or trade. The karate masters recognized that learning the basics of any art requires time, patience and repetitive practice.

By overstressing the intellectual aspects, we are told, we can learn something simply by “reading about it.” This statement reminds us that, although we must involve our rational intellectual functions in learning, we only really absorb an art or skill through the **experience** of repetitive practice.

## Offensive Techniques

### Types of Punches

**SEIKEN ZUKI** (Fore fist thrust)





Front view beginning to start a middle punch. Both hands should be together at the center of your body.

Side view showing left middle punch with right hand pulled back to chest.

Top view of a right middle punch.

**How to strike with the forefist (Seiken)**

Start with both hands together at the center of the body. Pull back striking hand to the chest with fist inverted. As the striking hand begins to punch, the reaction hand starts to pull back at the same time. About halfway out, you begin to turn your fist over, sliding your arm on the side of the body without lifting elbow out to the side. At that point you then start to turn the fist over and strike with the first two knuckles. Do not hyper-extend the arm, as it may cause injury to elbow and shoulder.



### **SEIKEN AGO-ZUKI**

Start with both hands up about your ears height.

Twist your body and punch to the chin using the first two knuckles.



### **SEIKEN MOROTE-ZUKI**

Using both fists together at the same time punch. Punch could be to face area, middle area, lower area of the body.

Shows a double punch to the face.



### **SEIKEN AWASE-ZUKI**

Draw both hands together back to your chest.

One hand punches to the face the same time as the other hand punches to the mid-section. Usually whichever leg is forward, that hand is low and inverted.



### **SEIKEN OI-ZUKI (Lunge punch)**

Start with right hand at chest to prepare for right punch.

Picture shows right foot has slid forward and right hand has punched to mid-section of the body.



### **SEIKEN GYAKU-ZUKI**

Like the lunge punch but now using opposite hand to the leg that's forward.



### **SEIKEN JUN-ZUKI (Side thrust punch)**

Using a straddle stance weight 50/50, punch from the side of your body.

Picture shows right jun-zuki to the midsection.



### **SEIKEN TATE-ZUKI (Vertical Punch)**

Start with right hand at chest to prepare for vertical punch.

Arm remains in a vertical position throughout the movement. Punch is done with the first two knuckles.



### **SEIKEN KAGI-ZUKI (Hook punch)**

Using the straddle stance, place right hand at chest.

Twist clockwise and twist back at the waist and punch.



### **SEIKEN AGE-ZUKI (Rising punch)**

Fist starts at chest then does an uppercut movement using the front of the fist to punch up.

Picture shows rising punch under the chin.



### **SEIKEN SHITA-ZUKI (Short punch)**

Using an inverted fist, punch forward only extending arm no more than a few inches from the body. When contact is made, bend wrist up and push in.

### **Uraken-Uchi (Inverted fist strike)**



**SHOMEN-UCHI (Strike to front face)**

Start with both arms in front of you about chest height. Lifting arm up and out in front of you, snap your wrist and strike with the back of the hand.

Picture shows left shomen-uchi to the face area.



**SAYU-UCHI (Strike to right & left)**

Start with both hands fists together chest height. Whichever side you are going to strike, look first and then strike with the back of the hand.

Picture shows left sayu-uchi to the head area.



**FURI-UCHI (Strike to body)**

Striking hand starts on top of the other about middle of the body. Hand swings to the side of the body.

Picture shows furi-uchi to the mid-section.





### **Mawashi-Uchi (Roundhouse strike)**

Prepare to strike by placing one arm behind your back other arm across the chest.

Swing arm in a clockwise position stopping in front of your forehead. Snap wrist and use the back hand to strike. Other arm is pulled back to the chest.

Picture shows mawashi-uchi to the back of the head.

### **Shuto-Uchi (Knife hand strike)**



### **SHUTO GAMMEN-UCHI (Knife hand to the face)**

Start with hands down at your sides. Then twist your body and bring one hand behind your head, other hand across the chest near the armpit. Elbow should not rest on the body.

Begin counter-clockwise movement in a big circle. Same time other hand starts to pull back to chest.

Finish position of strike is with wrist bent, fingers together and about eyes height.

Picture shows left shuto gammen-uchi to the temple area.



**SAKOTSU-UCHI (Downward strike to the collarbone)**

Start with hands down at your sides. Then twist your body and bring one hand behind your head, other hand across the chest near the armpit. Elbow should not rest on the body.

Striking hand starts to go up then out in front.

Striking hand continues in a downward movement with the wrist slightly bent up using side of hand but not fingers. Other hand is pulled back to the chest.

Picture shows right sakotsu-uchi to opponent.

**SAKOTSU-UCHI KOMI (Driving strike to the collar-bone)**



Start with both hands open, one pulled back to your chest.



Drive hand straight out then slightly bend wrist and use side of hand to strike.



Picture shows right sakotsu-uchi komi to opponent.



Side view of beginning position. One hand behind the head other hand across the chest.



Striking hand semi-circles down stopping in front of your groin. Your elbow stops at the side of the body. Other hand is pulled back to chest.



Picture shows a punch being blocked and a hizo uchi to the side of the body.

## UCHI-UCHI (Inner knife hand strike)



Striking hand goes to the opposite ear inside the other arm. Be sure to twist your hips.



Remain in the same position and strike with the inside hand. Using the side of hand strike opponent on the side of the head.



Picture shows uchi-uchi to the side of the neck.

## Defensive Techniques



### **JUJI-UKE (Cross arm block)**

Opponent front snap kick to mid-section being blocked with juji-uke. Usually when your left foot is front your left arm is underneath your right.

## **“Karate Ni Sente Nashi”**

Karate began as a system of unarmed self-defense, which allowed Okinawan farmers to defend themselves against soldiers of an occupation army. Even as karate blossomed into a formal art, Gichin Funakoshi, one of the early masters, continued to emphasize the perfection of defensive techniques before offensive techniques for the well-balanced karate-ka.

Defensive techniques are, of course, of great practical value. Secondly, they require the use of basic blocks and can be perfected only by repetition. Finally, the study of defensive techniques encourages the development of certain personality traits, namely calmness, awareness and, with persistent practice, a sincere humility. A true karateka will never think about using his/her arsenal of kicks and punches indiscriminately. They are only to be used as a last resort, when all other alternatives are exhausted. Even in a pure self-defense situation, a true karate-ka will use just the right amount of controlled force to deter the opponent and no more. All this requires a mind that is alert and controlled at all times.

### **GEDAN BARAI (Lower parry block)**





*A* One hand in front of your groin, the other hand to opposite ear. Palm of your hand facing your body.

*B* The hand at your ear blocks down in a slightly curved motion using the forearm, while the other hand is pulled back to chest.

*C* Picture shows left lower parry block to opponent's front snap kick.

### **CHUDAN UCHI-UKE (Middle inside block)**



*D* Twist body and place blocking arm under other arm across chest.

*E* Blocking arm moves forward and out in front of body while body remains in the same position.

*F* Finish position is one arm using the forearm to block and the other arm pulled back to the chest. Hand should be about shoulder height.

*G* Side view of left middle inside block.



*H* Picture shows opponent's punch being blocked by a left chudan uchi-uke.

### **CHUDAN SOTO-UKE (Middle outside block)**





*A* Picture shows side view of beginning outside block. One hand behind the head same time the other arm across the chest.

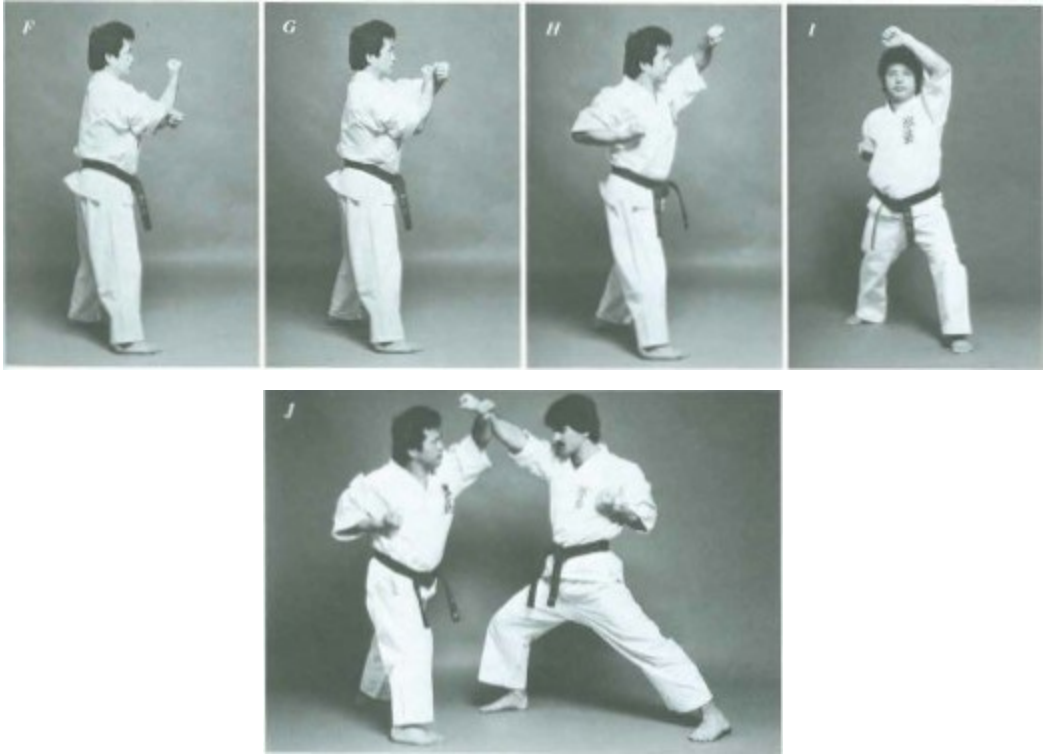
*B* The hand behind the head begins a big semi-circle to the front.

*C* The blocking arm stops in front of your body while the other hand is pulled back to your chest. Be sure to twist your whole body with your elbow in.

*D* Front view of the right middle outside block.

*E* Picture shows middle punch being blocked by a left chudan sotouke.

**JODAN UKE (Upper block)**



*F* Starting position is with hands down at your side. Then one arm comes in front of your face while blocking arm goes in front in a horizontal position near the elbow.

*G* Blocking arm begins to slide upward.

*H* Finish position is with the blocking arm above the head in a 45° angle, not too close to the forehead. Other hand is pulled back to the chest.

*I* Front view of upper block showing correct angle of blocking arm.

*J* Right punch to face being blocked by a left jodan uke.

### **CHUDAN UCHI UKE-GEDAN BARAI (Circular middle inside block and lower parry)**



One arm up and other arm in a lower position. When technique is done the upper arm goes down inside of the other in a circular motion. Upper hand should be shoulder height.

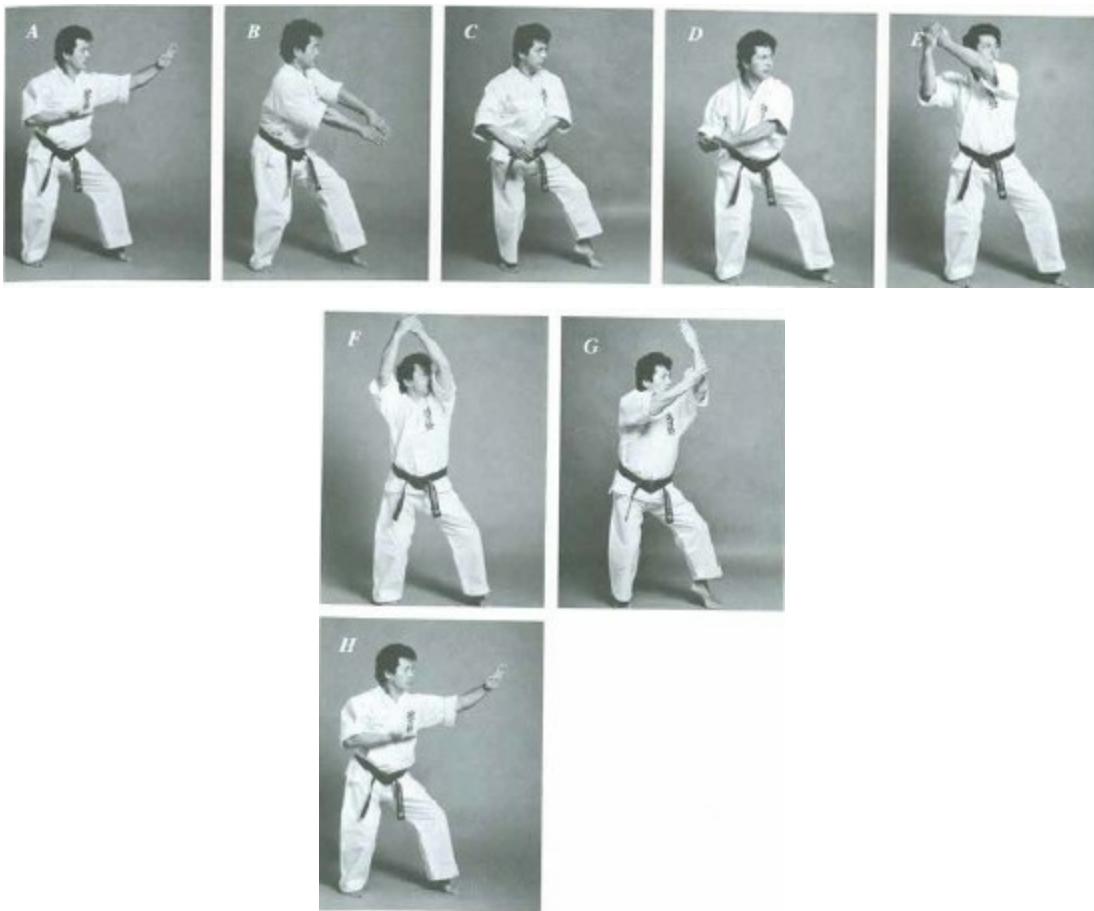


Side view of finished technique.



Picture shows chudan uchi uke-gedan barai to block awase zuki.

### **KOKUTSU DACHI SHUTO MAWASHI UKE (Back leaning stance with knife hand roundhouse block)**



**A** In back leaning stance with left foot forward, left arm is extended forward with hand held at eyes height and slight bend on the elbow. Right hand is horizontal in front of the mid-section.

**B** In back leaning stance position hands together in front of you.

**C** Begin to circle downward with one hand inside the other. When left foot is forward your left hand is inside the right.

**D** Still continue counter-clockwise circular movement with hands together.

**E** Bringing hands up above the head still in a circular movement. Inside hand remains inside throughout movement.

**F** Hands continue high above the head.

**G** Hands begin to separate. The inside hand starts a 45° angle down and outward while the other hand begins to drop straight down toward the front of the mid-section.

**H** Finish position.

**KOTE-UKE (Circular upward forearm block)**



Start position with arm extended.



Circle clockwise using inside of forearm to block. Hand finishes at shoulder height.

**KAKE-UKE (Circular downward forearm block)**



Start hand position at shoulder height.



Keep elbow still and start a clockwise circular downward movement.

**JUJI-UKE (Cross arm block)**



Shuto juji-uke (Open hand upper cross block)



Seiken juji-uke (Downward cross block with hands in a fist)

**KAKIWAKE UKE**  
(Double downward circular block)



**SOETE-UKE (Reinforced forearm block)**

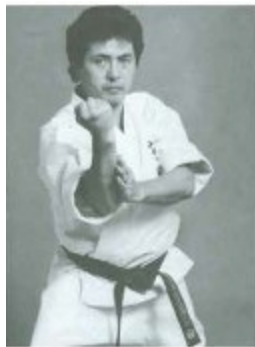


Upper reinforced forearm block.





Outside reinforced forearm block.



Inside reinforced forearm block.



Inside but using a fist to reinforce the forearm.



## LEG TECHNIQUES

Leg techniques are generally considered to be some three to five times more powerful than hand and arm techniques. This follows from the greater mass of the legs, and the direct involvement of the hip and its angular momentum.

Leg techniques generally require more agility, flexibility and coordination to be applied successfully, particularly in combinations. The exercises in Chapter 3 should be studied and practiced in order to loosen up the hip area and to stretch the hamstrings, both of which increase the effectiveness of kicks. The legs can also strike from many different angles, which can be mixed up and disguised in order to surprise an opponent.

Generally, the foot of the supporting leg pivots as the student kicks. This helps thrust the hip of the kicking leg into the opponent and prevents strain on the knee of the supporting leg. Always maintain a slight bend at the knee of the supporting leg.

Kicking also places stress on the lumbar (lower back) area. Strong abdominal muscles help to counteract these effects. After practicing kicks for any extended period, it is also good to stretch the lower back, as shown in Chapter 3.

### Offensive Techniques

#### MAE KEAGE (Front straight high kick)



*A* Front view of a right straight high kick. Hands are in a horizontal position and your kicking leg should be in line with supporting leg.

*B* Side view of the front straight high kick.

#### MAE GERI (Front snap kick)



*C* Front view of the front snap kick using the ball of the foot to hit target. It is very important to quickly pull the leg back after kick.

*D* Side view of a front snap kick to the face area.

*E* Picture shows a right front snap kick to the mid-section.

**HIZA GERI (Knee kick)**



From a standing position begin to lift knee straight up with your toes of the foot turned down.



Knee is brought all the way up to touch the chest. Keep your supporting leg slightly bent.



Side view of the knee kick.



Picture shows knee kick to the face area.

### **KIN GERI (Groin kick)**



**A** Lift knee about waist height with toes down.

**B** Quickly snap foot out using the instep to hit target.

**C** Picture shows a right kin geri to the opponent's groin area.

## **MAWASHI GERI(Round-housekick)**



Start position



With hands down near your sides, lift knee about waist height.



Twist your foot of the supporting leg in, about 90°, and make kicking leg horizontal to the floor. The knee is pointed toward your target.





Quickly snap out leg from the knee using the ball of the foot to hit target.



Punch is blocked and a right mawashi geri is done to the head area.

### **KAKE GERI(Hook kick)**



*A* Start position

*B* Twist body about 90° lifting knee about waist height.



*C* Begin to extend leg outward.

*D* Continue extending leg outward aiming the heel to hook target. The body can lean backward to maintain balance and adjust height of kick.



*E* Leg now fully extended making contact with target with the heel of the foot.

*F* After contact continue to bend knee and hook backward toward the body.

# **YOKO KEAGE (Straight high side kick)**



Start position



Keeping the kicking leg as straight as possible, begin to lift it on your side. You are aiming the edge of the foot at your target. Note that the big toe is up and rest of toes are down.



Supporting leg is slightly bent as the kicking leg continues an upward swing.



Kicking leg in its highest position makes contact using edge of the foot. Hands are held on both sides of the leg.

### **YOKO GERI (Side thrust kick)**



Picture shows a punch to face blocked and grabbed and a yoko geri done under the chin.



Right side kick.

### **KANSETSU GERI (Joint kick)**

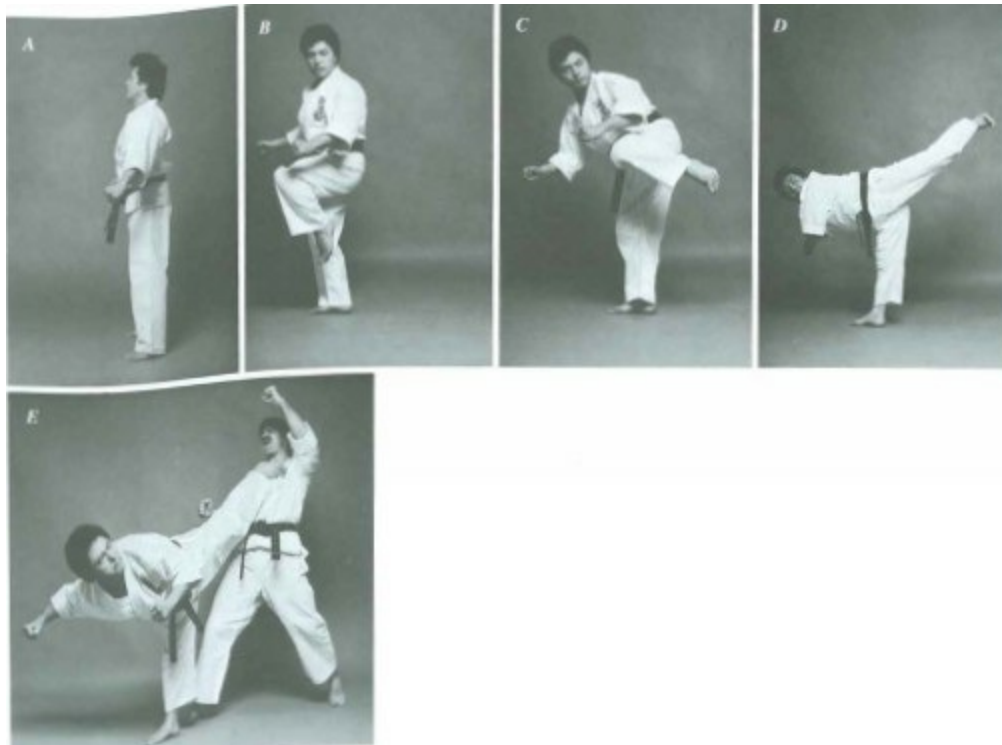


Picture shows punch to face blocked and left leg in position to kick opponent behind the knee with the knife foot.



Holding onto the opponent's arm, deliver joint kick to back of knee. When executing the kick, slightly bend knee of the supporting leg and drop hips to add pressure to the kick.

### **USHIRO GERI (Back kick)**



**A** Start position.

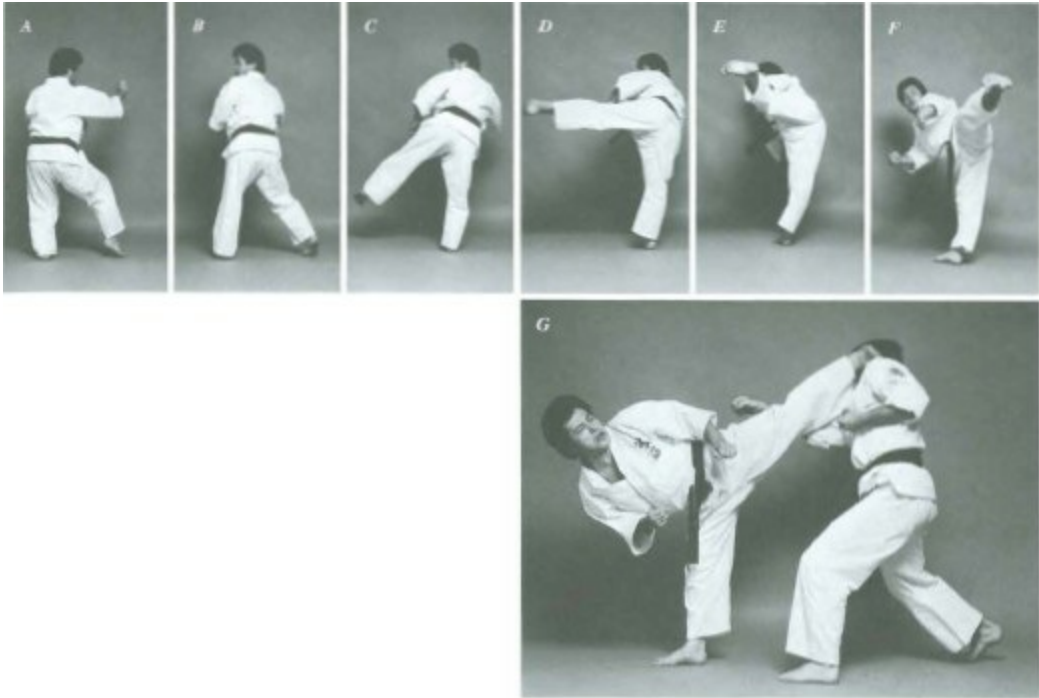
**B** Look over shoulder, as knee comes up about waist height.

**C** Lean body forward. Bend knee slightly on supporting leg and make kicking leg horizontal to the floor.

***D*** Kick straight back, striking with the bottom of the heel.

***E*** Application of left straight back kick to the throat.

**USHIRO MAWASHI GERI(Back spin kick)**



***A*** Start position in back leaning stance.

***B*** Look over the shoulder of the kicking leg begin to pivot on the ball of your front foot and twisting body.

***C*** Continue to turn your body. Keeping kicking leg straight, start to lift it.

***D*** Kicking leg remains as straight as possible while entire body continues to rotate in a circle.

***E*** Continue rotation.

***F*** Leaning forward helps maintain balance. Hands are in front of you.

***G*** Application of ushiro mawashi geri using the back of the heel to the head. The bottom flat part of the foot can also be used to slap the neck area. Also the sokuto in a vertical position can be used to hit the side of the head.

**UCHI MAWASHI GERI (Inside roundhouse kick)**



**H** Start position

**I** Application of uchi mawashi to block a punch to the head area.

**J** Keep leg as straight as possible and rotate it in front of your body, then out.

### **SOTO MAWASHI GERI(Outside roundhouse kick)**

**K** Just opposite of uchi mawashi. Rotate your leg out away from your body, then in, across it.

### **KAKATO GERI (Heel kick)**



Application of right heel kick to the side of face.

### **KAKATO USHIRO KEAGE (Rising heel kick)**





Defender using a rising heel kick to the groin area of a person grabbing from behind.

## Defensive Techniques



Left uchi mawashi blocking a front snap kick.



Left soto mawashi blocking a right front snap kick.



Defender stopping kick with knife foot.



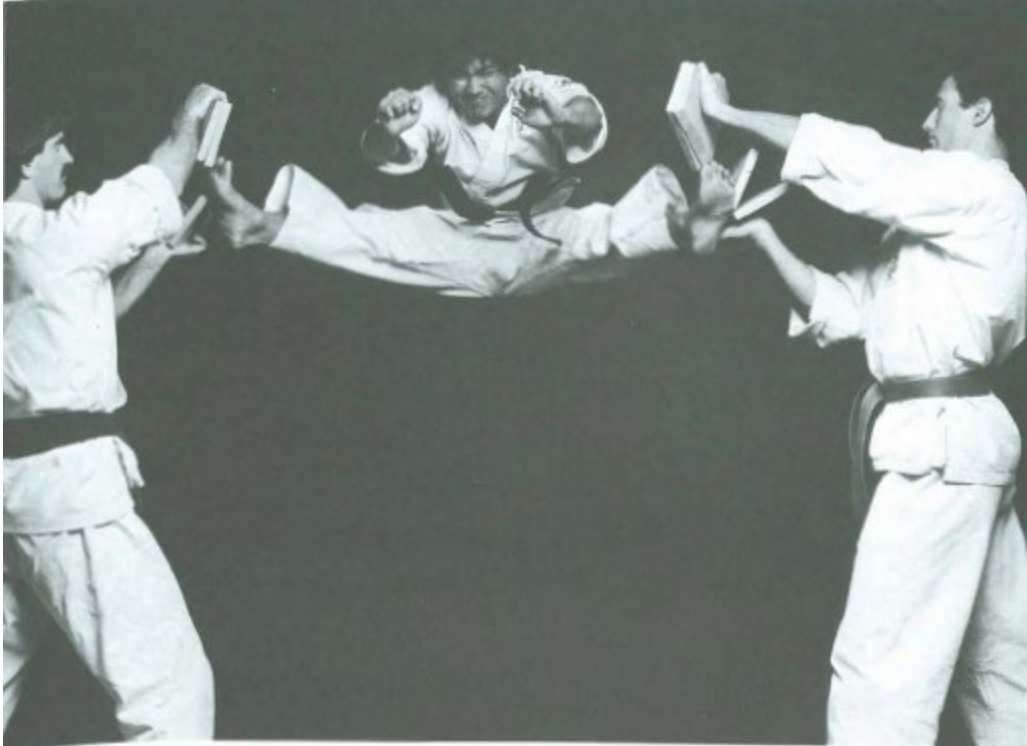
Defender stopping kick with teisoku.



Using the shin to block a roundhouse kick.



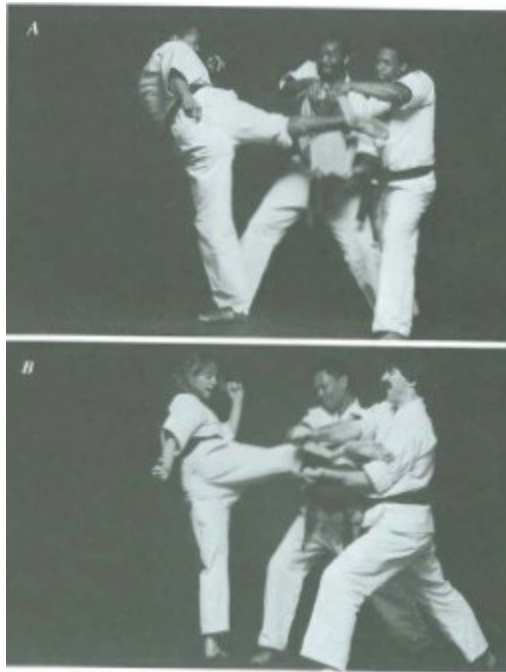
Using the kakato to push opponent off balance from a back spin kick.



Double jump kick



Descending elbow through solid concrete blocks.



*A* Shin kick to solid concrete blocks.

*B* Woman using shin kick through 3" of wood.

## TAMESHIWARI (BREAKING)

Tameshiwari is a true and excellent way of testing spirit and basic karate technique. Unfortunately, tameshiwari has also been misrepresented and misunderstood by the general public. Tameshiwari by itself is not karate, although it is important.

Any natural weapon can be used for breaking, e.g., fist, knife, hand, elbow or ball of foot. The weapons can be employed in many basic techniques, and a variety of materials can be broken. These include wood (usually softwood, which does not splinter), concrete, glass or stone.

Tameshiwari has a Zen-like simplicity to it. The student confronts the challenge of breaking the material by him or herself. The challenge lasts for a split second only, but a good break demands that a student marshal **all** his or her resources, physical and spiritual, for that one moment. The student must **understand** the material to be broken, and, as the Zen master would say, the student must “become one” with the material. Tameshiwari, under careful supervision, can be practiced by men and women. It should always be used to encourage and assist the student in his or her basic practice.

The pictures in this chapter show a number of formidable breaks by senior students. Tameshiwari, in addition to testing power and technique, is a test of the spirit. These pictures show concentration, focus and strong spirit.



A Jumping straight high kick.

***B*** Downward knife hand strike.

***C*** Concrete blocks broken with the front of the head.



***A*** Jumping side kick.



***B*** Downward punch through concrete blocks.



***C*** High roundhouse kick through several boards.





***D*** Right forefist punch through several boards.



***A*** High jumping knee kick.



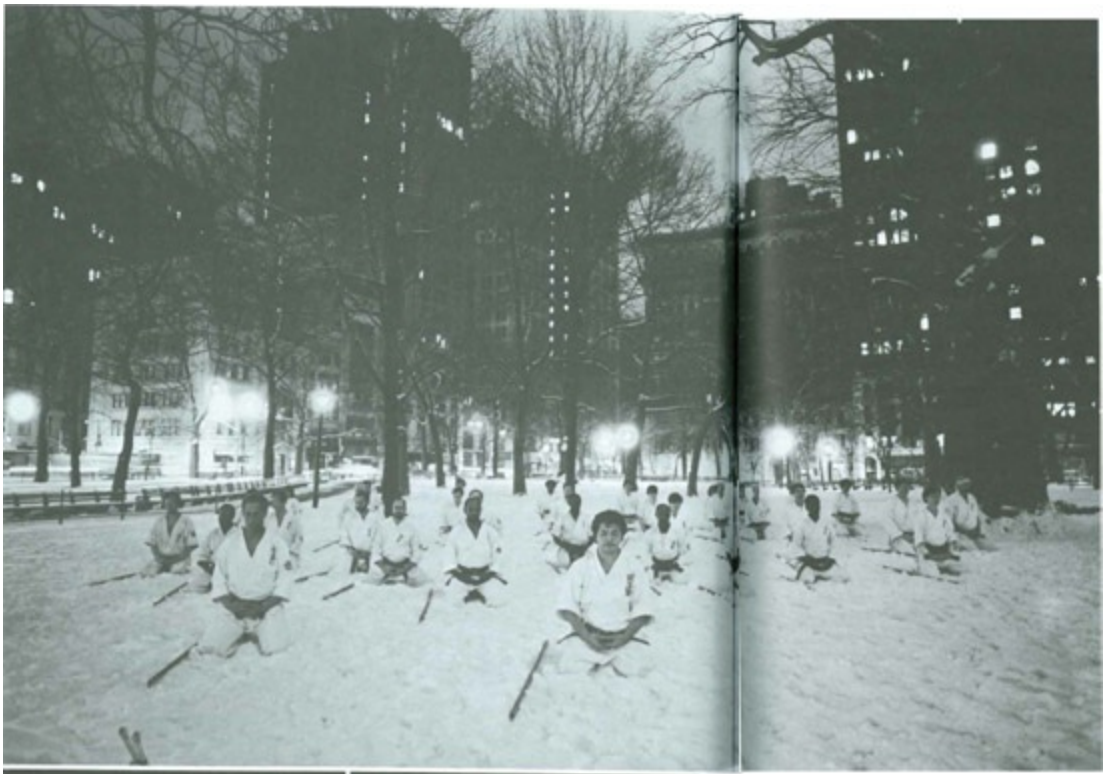
***B*** Jumping straight back kick.



***C*** 7' foot 2" x 3" broken over a complete tense body.



***D*** High side kick.



Outdoor winter training, Madison Square Park in New York City. The Empire State Building is in background.

## KATA (FORMAL EXERCISES)



### Definition and Purpose of Kata

Kata means, literally, “shape” or “form.” A kata is a sequence of blocks, kicks or punches employed from one or more stances, involving movement forward, backward and to the sides. The number of movements and their sequence are very specifically laid out. The balance between offensive and defensive techniques, the direction and flow of movement, and the stances employed serve to give each kata its distinctive character.

Every traditional martial art has its katas. The katas are links from earlier times, having been handed down from the founding masters of the arts, to be practiced in precisely the same way over the generations. The modern mind asks, “Surely these katas can be improved and changed. That’s progress!” Katas are practiced as handed down, out of respect for the knowledge and wisdom of the masters. Our job, in the way of karate, is to practice the katas over long periods of time. When we do this with the proper attitude, we will uncover the deeper meaning of the katas. Then we, too, will intuitively understand why the practice of kata remains constant.

Katas are usually given names. For example, *Taikyoku sono Ichi* is a basic kata developed by the Master Gichin Funakoshi when he was systematizing the techniques of Okinawa-te into the forerunner of karate; this kata is practiced by beginning students of Seido as well as of other styles. When a karate-ka hears this name, he immediately knows the pattern of movement along the floor, and the blocks and punches employed. Particular schools may vary stylistically in the way they make certain movements, but the essential elements of certain basic katas are unvarying even across different styles.

The building blocks of kata come from basic techniques, i.e., the blocks, strikes, kicks and leg defensive techniques illustrated in other chapters of this book. These techniques are built on the foundation of the basic stances. A basic kata might have only 20 movements, with movement from and into one stance, employing one block and one punch. Advanced katas, which might have up to 100 movements, progressively add movements, more techniques and combinations of techniques. This progression in the body of katas, which a student learns over the course of karate study, provides both encouragement and the incentive to learn more.

### Why Have Kata?

The answer to this question is two fold. First, katas are excellent pedagogical devices for teaching basic hand and leg techniques in the context of movement and application. Through the practice of kata, a student learns balance, rhythm, coordination, how to shift weight between stances, the

transition between offense and defense, breathing, concentration and focus. Kata provides one form of practice that integrates the use and perfection of all these factors.

The second reason for practicing kata is that it is an excellent physical exercise, which can strengthen and tone the muscles of the arms, legs and torso. Katas employ both isotonic and isometric movements of the muscles. Also, when a student moves vigorously through a kata several times, one after another without rest, it provides a real aerobic workout.

The early masters of the martial arts were, by nature and by dint of their Zen training, very practical men. In developing and refining the practice of kata, they found a unified method of basic practice, muscular/skeletal conditioning, and cardiovascular training. Kata is essentially an individual endeavor. As such, it allows for differences in age, skill, and conditioning; each student can exert himself or herself at a level commensurate with his or her own levels of knowledge, ability and physical condition. Kata can be practiced in the dojo, but it can also be practiced outdoors, in nature. In the earliest days of karate practice, in the Ryukyu Islands, the students practiced not on smooth, hardwood floors, but in barns or in remote corners of their fields, since the practice of martial arts was banned. Practicing kata outdoors, dealing with sloping ground, rocks, or uneven grass, adds another dimension of challenge to concentration and practice. Kata provides the karate student a flexible and individualized method for total fitness.

In Zen, we are told that learning and growth come not from theory and books, but from direct, personal experience. In Zen, this means intensive zazen, or seated meditation. This fundamental Zen principle applies to kata also. It is not possible to understand what a kata has to teach by looking at a book. In a book such as this, the photos provide a roadmap of the kata's movements, and they serve to illustrate certain essential principles to a student who has some familiarity with karate already. The student must incorporate these principles directly into the practice of his or her kata. This can only be done by doing a kata over and over and over again. Gradually, as the student passes through the different stages of the learning process, the kata will begin to yield its secrets.

The real genius of the early masters of karate in their development of a training system, the practice of kata, which integrates modern principles of physical conditioning with the oldest Zen principles. This is why we have katas, and why they are practiced as they were handed down.

## **Is That All?**

In addition to its pedagogical value, kata allows, at a higher level, for the expression of individuality and creativity. Having just said that katas are rigidly mapped out, this might sound a bit strange but it isn't really.

Let us suppose that a person totally unacquainted with karate comes into the dojo and sees an advanced student and a beginning student doing the same kata. What differences would this viewer see? Watching the advanced student, one can see a story in the movements; it seems clear that there are opponents at various points, though none are visible. The viewer can sense the drama in the sequence of movements, with the action rising and falling. The fortunes shift over the course of the kata, and there is a clear, dramatic high point. The techniques are crisp, sharp, and effective, even to a viewer who is unfamiliar with karate. The advanced student seems animated and totally absorbed by the kata.

By contrast, the beginner's kata has the appearance of someone learning a new dance step, sometimes awkward, often hesitant and unsure. There is a listless, aimless quality about the movements, and the viewer sees no story emerging from them. Beyond physical dexterity, the

differences that a viewer will see between the katas of beginning and advanced students are spiritual differences, which are vital for the understanding and perfection of kata. Everyone goes through this beginner's stage. It is wonderful to see how, through dedicated practice, a student moves from the beginner's stage into the accomplished stage of the advanced student. It is not a question of innate abilities, but of effort and practice.

## **What Is Kata, Really?**

We mentioned that every kata has a name, given by the master who "composed" the kata. These names are clues to the deepest meaning of the katas, but most students ignore them as just labels. *Taikyoku*, for example, means "wide view," or "to see clearly." In the kata, the student moves systematically through all the compass headings. The student's movements are not restricted, but cover a wide area. When the student is learning and practicing this kata, he or she should bear in mind, "wide view." This is important not for the kata alone, but for the way we live and the way we act.

Kata, beyond its literal meaning, means "how one behaves." Behavior and attitude are things that we strive to change and improve through our study of Seido karate. The practice of kata is vital for these ends. So many problems in life stem from narrow-mindedness, prejudice, and cultural biases, which limit our understanding of ourselves, the world, and of others. *Taikyoku* means keeping an open mind, not restricting our focus, not clinging to a narrow view of a situation, being open to the universe of possibilities. Shunryo Suzuki, a Zen *roshi*, has said,

*"In the beginner's mind, there are many possibilities. In the expert's mind, there are very few."*

*Taikyoku* kata is about keeping this beginner's mind, a concept that we emphasize very strongly in this book. The "composers" of the katas had profound ideas to express, which they embodied in the katas. It is the student's individual challenge to discover them through study and patient practice.

Behavior is very important in Zen and karate. Ritual, formality and gestures are very important. When you begin a kata, for example, you must prepare yourself. When you hear "Yoi!" (get ready), there is a carefully defined procedure for readying the body and the mind for kata. This is a gesture. Each person makes this gesture in his or her own unique way. Every gesture can be full of meaning, even to an untrained onlooker, if done with total concentration and commitment.

Kata is about the reality of the present. Everything—body, mind and spirit—concentrated and coordinated for one purpose only. There is no other distraction or competing interest. This is the way we want to approach everything we do in life, with total dedication, total concentration and sincere best effort. Kata, in its highest sense, is a means of self-perfection.

Kata is also a mirror of our karate practice and of our emotional and mental state. If we are tense, preoccupied with work or financial problems, uninvolved in the spirit of the kata, it will be apparent. The movements will be mechanical, transitions between movements will be sloppy, kicks and punches will have no center. We may even "forget" a movement that we have done a hundred times. Kata is a sign of the health of our practice, as the pulse is a sign of our general health. Through kata, we can monitor for ourselves progress and changes in our practice. Because kata is about changing our behavior and attitudes, it is Zen. Because kata is also about movement, it can be truly understood as "moving Zen."

## **Stages In Learning Kata**



## Dosen or Embusen (Line of Movement)

This preliminary stage involves the basic memorization of the kata's techniques and their correct order of execution. An instructional book can be helpful here. Unfortunately, at this point, many students who learn the movements of a kata then mistakenly feel that they "know" the kata. A Zen master would say that this reflects modern man's tendency to overemphasize the forebrain. Knowing a kata's movements is just the beginning of the way to knowledge.



### Uchi Ni Sei Araba, Onozuto Sotoni Arawaru

(Take care of the inner spirit, and it will naturally reflect on the outside)

Developing *sei* (the honest and sincere spirit) is a constant, lifelong process. Approach this task little by little, one step at a time. This principle applies very well to kata. Students want to "learn" kata very quickly and then move on to other katas. Even after you have learned the movements of a kata and can do them smoothly without mistakes, there is much more work to do. Each time you do a kata is a separate, unique time. A karate instructor can watch a student do kata and can see the student's inner condition—nervousness, lack of interest, self-consciousness or irritation. A good, strong kata comes from a calm, focused spirit that is applied from the "Yoi" straight through to the finish. Movement and technique are vital for kata, but the sincere spirit is what marks the best kata a student can do.



### Ki Haku

*Ki* means your inner energy, or spirit. *Ki haku* means the projection of this inner energy to an opponent. Projecting one's *ki* need not involve any vigorous action. For example, suppose that you were confronted on the street by someone trying to draw you into a fight. If all other alternatives were exhausted, let's say that you moved into a strong, basic fighting stance, with your eyes concentrating on the opponent and a calm expression on your face. Right away, you might sense surprise or

hesitation on the part of the opponent. This type of communication of your spirit is called *ki haku*.

## **Ren Ma**

This second stage concerns itself with the mastery of technique. *Ren ma* means to “keep polishing.” Through countless hours of diligent practice, movements that were hesitant and awkward become refined and polished. Kicks and hand techniques become fast, crisp and focused. Stances become stronger, transitions between stances become smooth and graceful. The breathing is controlled and coordinated with the execution of techniques. The student becomes attuned to the internal rhythm of the kata, finding pauses and emphasizing contrasts between slow, defined movements and rapid-fire bursts of speed and power. Concentration is paid to the kata’s fine points, like the position of the hands and the direction of the head and eyes. The student also makes a special effort to understand the purpose and function of every movement.

## **Shuchu Ryoku**

Having developed the kata to a high level of technical proficiency, the karate-ka is now ready to embark on the highest stage of learning. Here, the kata is so ingrained in the student’s subconscious mind that no conscious attention need be paid to which move comes next or to the execution of any particular technique. This is what Zen masters call *mushin*, which means “no mind.” The conscious, rational thought process, centered in the forebrain, is not used at all. Without any preconceived thought of what move is to be performed, the karate-ka, just as in a real situation, responds automatically to the movement of the unseen opponent. Spontaneously, it just comes out. What began as memorization of specific movements has now become spontaneous and automatic response. The student is completely immersed in the reality of the kata. *Shuchu ryoku* means that the *ki*, or spiritual energy, of the karate-ka is concentrated and brought to bear on the kata, resulting in something beautiful, strong and powerful.

## **Kata’s Relation to Kumite**

We have emphasized in the previous sections kata’s relationship to Zen and karate tradition. In recent years, particularly in the United States, there are some practitioners who suggest that kata is not really essential, at least not as much as the traditional schools claim. These karate-ka see little relation between kata, kumite, and self-defense. They feel that students might more profitably spend their time in additional kumite or in training to develop specific fighting skills. This lack of appreciation for the benefits of kata stems from many sources. One is the exaggerated claim some instructors have made in regard to the relationship between kata and kumite. Some instructional books suggest that a student will become a good fighter solely through the practice of kata. Such notions create disappointment and cynicism for students, who after their first kumite session quickly become aware that there is much that kata has not prepared them for directly. Kata is not irrelevant to developing fighting skills because it does strengthen technique, coordination and balance. It also fosters the kind of control of body and mind essential for good kumite. The fact is, however, that to be a good fighter, one must fight. Kata is not a substitute for kumite in developing fighting skills, but kata is an adjunct to kumite practice, as well as having a deeper significance all its own.

## **Kata and Everyday Life**

The purpose of karate is to prepare the karate-ka for life, not merely for physical battle. The simple truth is that, of the many challenges we will face in the world, few if any will call for a strong kick or

a timely punch. Although a strong, healthy body is important to well-being and success, a strong, disciplined mind is paramount. Kata is central in developing these qualities, and this is what makes it particularly relevant to everyday life.

One of the challenges of life is knowing what to do, setting goals and priorities. Once these have been established, realization becomes the challenge. Education, work, relationships, all require sustained effort. Being able to concentrate and focus your mental energies are prime ingredients for success. For example, suppose that you decide to become a lawyer. Long hours of study are required, often when you are tired or when you would rather be doing something else. Often, your eyes will be on a page of text, but your mind is not there, having wandered off to other thoughts. You may have the intent, and you may put in the time, but because of the lack of concentration and focus, progress will be slow and tedious.

We are all willing to accept that to have a strong body, we must do physical exercise. To have a strong mind, we must also exercise systematically and consistently. In kata the student must first learn the movements. This is as much a mental chore as a physical one. Each time you practice kata you are exercising concentration, striving to attain the harmony of body and mind that allows you to focus your energy, or *ki*. As you progress in your training, and the katas become more complex, deeper concentration and focus are required. The mind, like the body, responds to this progressive training, becoming stronger through work and repetition.

Some students feel bored or oppressed by the detail and exactness required in the polishing of kata. Students feel, “What difference does it make if my hand position is not exactly like the instructor showed? No one will notice if my leg is slightly bent in that stance too.” However, it is precisely the attention to detail demanded by kata that cultivates self-discipline, making yourself repeat something until you get it right. Concentration and self-discipline are both attitudes and skills. They can be learned, and they must be practiced.

In Japan, Sadaharu Oh, the “Japanese Babe Ruth,” became the most well-known and popular public figure when he broke Henry Aaron’s career record for home runs in baseball. Mr. Oh, as he is known, was almost on his way out of baseball early in his career, with the fans ridiculing his tendency to overswing and strike out. He then met Mr. Arakawa, who became his personal batting coach, in one sense, but, in reality, his sensei. On one level, Arakawa-san changed the mechanics of Mr. Oh’s swing, particularly by teaching him a one-legged stance, which we call *tsuruashi dachi* in karate. Instead of taking batting practice in the cage like everyone else, Mr. Oh would spend long hours in front of a mirror with his bat, practicing his stance! Arakawa-san even had him learn *iai*, the art of drawing a sword. A baseball player doing kata! Mr. Oh says that this “spirit-discipline” became the key not only to his baseball success, but to a whole renewal of his life in many directions. The discipline and concentration developed through the practice of kata will permeate your every effort, no matter what you do. It becomes a part of your way of being.

In karate, no one will tell you what specific goals to pursue in life. Once you have made your choice, it is the purpose of your karate training to help you focus all your energy and talents on the accomplishment of your goals. Kata is a vehicle for developing that ability, which will help you in every aspect of living.

**Names and** We have strongly emphasized the deep significance of the names that the masters have given to the various kata. So, as a valuable aid to karate

# Meanings of Kata

students and to those interested in the historical and cultural roots of the martial arts, I have endeavored to lay out, for the first time in a systematic way, the underlying themes or messages of many basic and advanced kata in Seido, many of which are shared with other styles.

大 極 **Taikyoku** - Means taking the overview, the large view. See the whole rather than focusing on the individual parts.

平 安 **Pinan** - Means peace and harmony. Though the physical moves of kata involve techniques used for fighting, the purpose of kata is also to develop a calm, peaceful mind and harmony between mind and body.

**Sanchin Kata** - This is the oldest kata in karate-do. Loosely translated *sanchin* means “three points” or “three phases,” a reference to the fact that sanchin seeks to develop three elements at a time.

1. The mind, the body, and the techniques.
2. The internal organs, the blood circulation and the nervous system.
3. And the three ki located in
  - the top of the head (*tento*)
  - the diaphragm (*hara*)
  - and the lower abdomen (*tanden*)

Sanchin is an isometric kata where each motion is performed in a state of complete tension accompanied by powerful, deep breathing. It is aimed at strengthening the muscles and developing a strong stance and proper breathing. Its practice leads to the development of the inner power (*ki*) and to the coordination of mind and body. It teaches basic footwork, basic hand techniques and basic blocking techniques.

**Gekisai-dai, Gekisai-sho** - *Dai* here means large and *sho* means small. Such labeling of katas (large or small) is simply an alternative to using numbers. *Sai* means fortress or stronghold, *geki* means breakdown. Kata teaches strength through motion and the utilization of combinations, mobility and fluidity. Flexibility of attack and response will always be superior to, and thus defeat, rigid and inflexible brute strength.

安 粹 **Yansu** - Means keep pure, striving to maintain the purity of your principles and ideals, rather than compromising for the expedient.

突・耐・型 **Tsuki No Kata** - Means fortune and luck. Good fortune does not come simply by waiting. Each time we punch, in this kata, we should imagine that we are breaking down some barrier. Strong, persistent effort directed at our problems will bring us good fortune.

最破・波

**Saiha** - Meaning big wave, stands for the principle that no matter how large the problem that faces you, with determination and a strong bushido spirit you can break through.

轉 掌

**Tensho** - Means rolling hand or fluid hand. Refer also to the “three points” mentioned in sanchin kata.

征遠戰

**Seienchin** - Samurai warriors would go on expeditions lasting months or longer. They needed to maintain their strength and spirit over long periods of time. This kata is long and slow, with many movements performed from the *kiba dachi* stance. Often the legs become painfully tired, and the importance of maintaining a strong spirit becomes clearly evident.

知 音

**Bo Kata Chion** - Means sound knowledge. Sound knowledge of each movement and technique is the first step toward performing a kata properly. Seeking out sound knowledge is the foundation to achieving any goal you have set for yourself.

古流

五十四歩

**Koryu-gojushiho** - Means literally 54 steps. The principle is that each step you take is a link to the next step. Your past is linked with your present, your present to your future. In the same way, the modern is inextricably connected with the traditional. It is important to realize that whatever you achieve, it is always as a result of the steps you have taken to get there. You should never forget, therefore, or fail to appreciate, your parents, teachers, and the roots and tradition from which you come.

觀 空

**Kanku** - This kata is known as the “rising sun.” Literally, *kan* means good observance and *ku* means universe or air or emptiness. The opening move of the kata is the forming of a triangle above the head. We form the triangle with our hands, and we lean back and stare through it toward the universe and the rising sun. The significance is that no matter what problem or dilemma you may face, each day the sun rises anew and the universe is before you. Nothing is so terrible that it affects the basic reality of existence. As long as you are here and the sky and the sun are before you, you are never defeated.

The names and meanings of these katas are important. They should not be forgotten or the kata's name recited perfunctorily at its beginning. Rather, each time you perform a kata you should focus your mind on the principles and knowledge that underlie it.

大極型

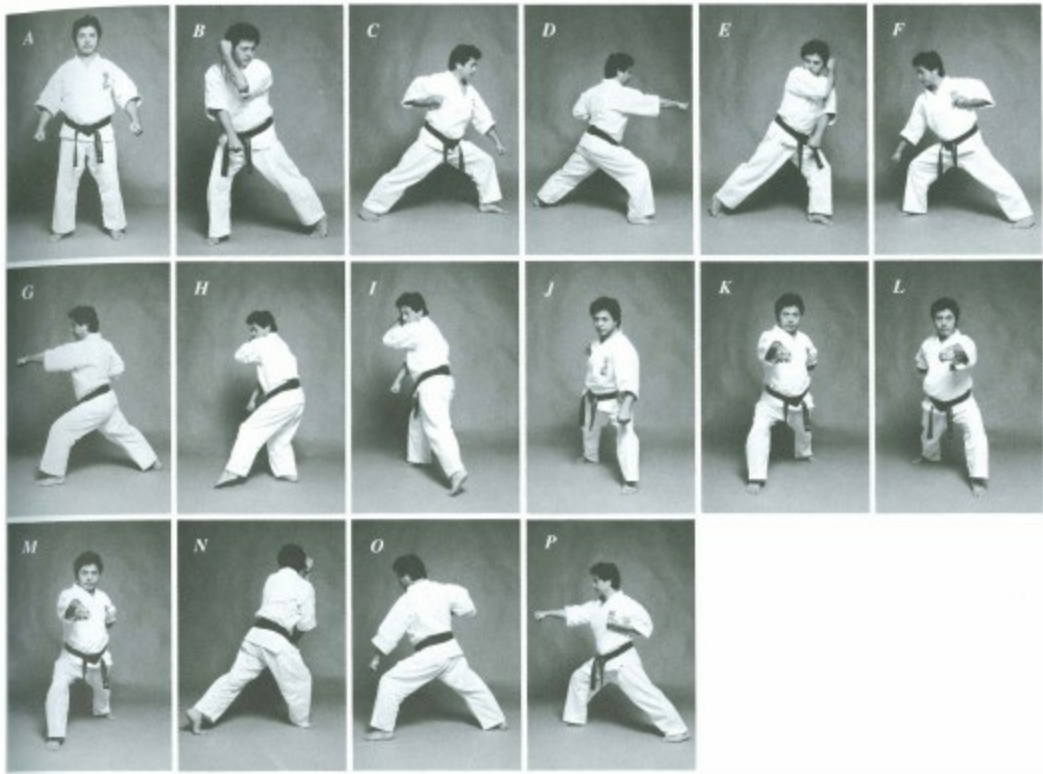
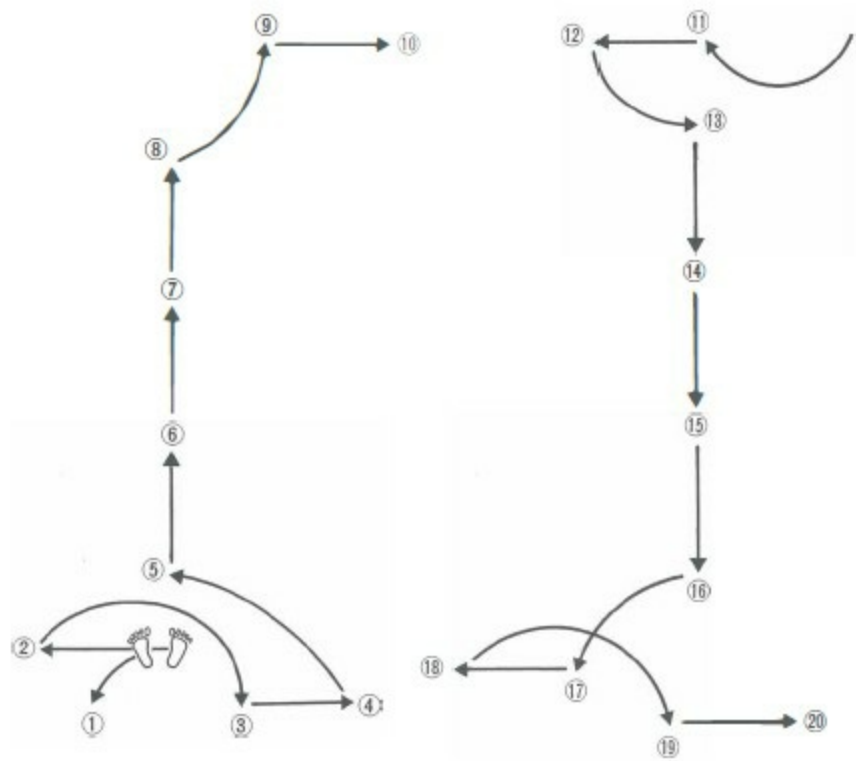
# Taikyoku Kata #1

This foundation kata is common to all styles of karate, and it dates back to the Okinawan practice. It employs one stance throughout (*zenkutsu dachi*), one basic block (*gedan barai*) and one basic punch (*chudan oi-zuki*). The student is also introduced to the idea of back-turning 180°, to defend against an opponent coming from behind.

Yoi

1. Turn 90° left into left zenkutsu dachi, left gedan barai.
2. Step into right zenkutsu dachi, right chudan zuki.
3. Turn 180° right into right zenkutsu dachi, right gedan barai.
4. Step into left zenkutsu dachi, left chudan zuki.
5. Turn 90° left into left zenkutsu dachi, left gedan barai.
6. Step into right zenkutsu dachi, right chudan zuki.
7. Step into left zenkutsu dachi, left chudan zuki.
8. Step into right zenkutsu dachi, right chudan zuki. Kiai!
9. Turn 270° left into left zenkutsu dachi, left gedan barai.
10. Step into right zenkutsu dachi, right chudan zuki.
11. Turn 180° right into right zenkutsu dachi, right gedan barai.
12. Step into left zenkutsu dachi, left chudan zuki.
13. Turn 90° left into left zenkutsu dachi, left gedan barai.
14. Step into right zenkutsu dachi, right chudan zuki.
15. Step into left zenkutsu dachi, left chudan zuki.
16. Step into right zenkutsu dachi, right chudan zuki. Kiai!
17. Turn 270° left into left zenkutsu dachi, left gedan barai.
18. Step into right zenkutsu dachi, right chudan zuki.
19. Turn 180° right into right zenkutsu dachi, right gedan barai.
20. Step into left zenkutsu dachi, left chudan zuki.



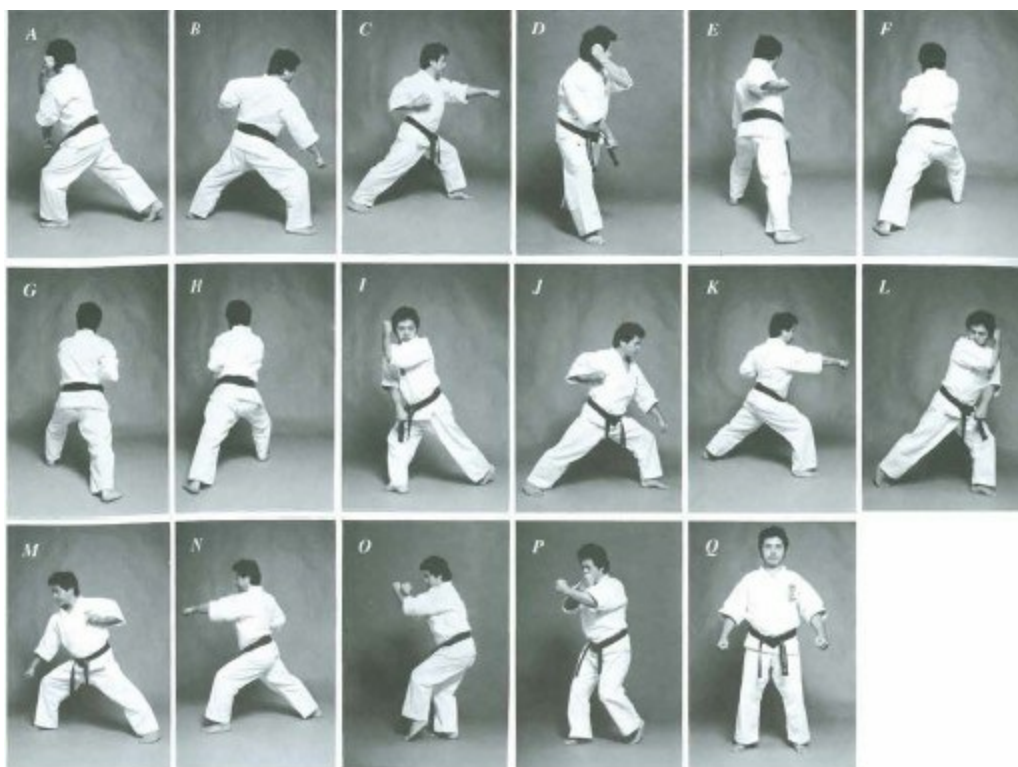


*A* Starting position.

*B* (Count 1: *B-C*) Look to your left side. Begin to step outward and slightly back with left foot. Bring your right hand in front of your groin area and left hand near your right ear.

*C* Twist your hip and execute a left downward block in left front leaning stance. Your feet should be shoulder width apart and the blocking arm slightly bent over the left knee.

- D (Count 2)** Step straight forward and right hand punch to mid-section.
- E (Count 3: E-F)** Right foot pull back 180° and slightly backward for width. Your left hand in front of your groin area and right hand near left ear. Look over right shoulder.
- F** Twist body 180° and execute right downward block in right front leaning stance.
- G (Count 4)** Step forward and left punch mid-section.
- H (Count 5: H-J)** Look 90° to your left. Begin to pull back left leg. Bring your right hand in front of your groin area and left hand to right ear.
- I** Keep body in same position as left leg moves outward at the 90° angle.
- J** Execute a left downward block in left front leaning stance.
- K (Count 6)** Step forward in right front leaning stance and right punch to mid-section.
- L (Count 7)** Step forward and left punch to mid-section.
- M (Count 8)** Step forward and right punch to mid-section and shout (kiai)!
- N (Count 9: N-O)** Get ready to turn 270°. Put right hand in front of your groin and left hand near right ear. Slide your left foot three-quarters of a circle to your right. This is a backward turn.
- O** Execute left downward block in left front leaning stance.
- P (Count 10)** Step forward and right punch to mid-section.



- A (Count 11: A-B)** Prepare to turn in the opposite direction. Slide right leg 180° backward and bring your left arm down in front of groin area and right hand near left ear.
- B** Twist body 180°. Execute a right downward block in right front leaning stance.
- C (Count 12)** Step forward and left punch to mid-section.
- D (Count 13: D-E)** Look 90° to your left. Step off with your left foot 90° with hands in position for left downward block.
- E** At 90° starting back to the position you started execute a left downward block.
- F (Count 14)** Step forward and right punch.
- G (Count 15)** Step forward and left punch.
- H (Count 16)** Step forward and right punch and kiai!
- I (Count 17: I-J)** Get ready for the backward turn 270°. Bring right hand in front of your groin area and left hand near your ear. Slide your left leg three quarters of a circle to the right side while looking over the left shoulder.
- J** Execute left downward block in left front leaning stance.
- K (Count 18)** Step forward and right punch to mid-section.
- L (Count 19: L-M)** Pull right leg back 180° and slightly behind you and position your hands for right downward block.
- M** Execute right downward block in right front leaning stance.
- N (Count 20)** Step forward and left punch mid-section.
- O (Naore: O-Q)** Slowly pull back left leg crossing arm in front of you.
- P** Still watching the same direction, pull left leg about two feet behind right foot with arms still cross in front of you.
- Q** Twist entire body 90° left facing front and slowly bring your hands down to the starting position.



## Seido Kata #1

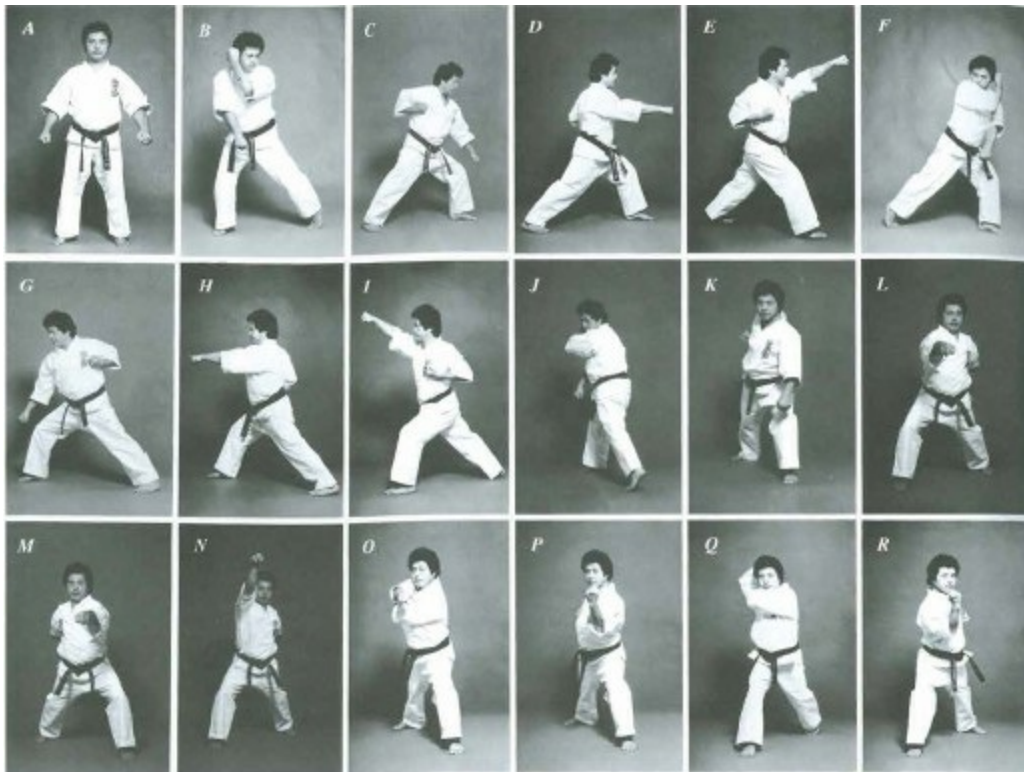
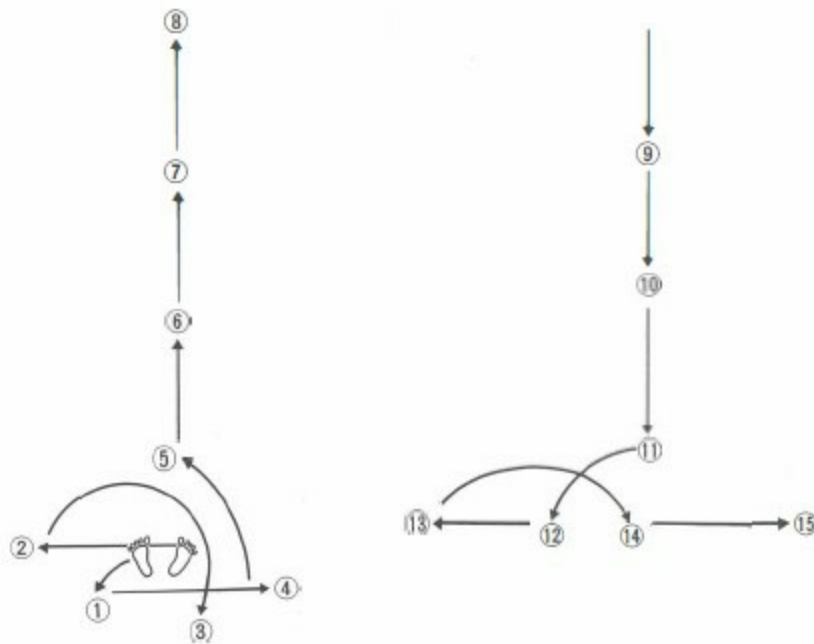
This foundation kata in the Seido system represents an innovative approach when compared to the traditional beginner's katas. First, in common with other styles, this kata uses basic stances, blocks and punches, although it employs more of them. Secondly, it teaches defensive techniques while moving back, a more realistic situation than always having the student move in. Finally, the student is

introduced to the reverse punch, a powerful basic technique, and to the attendant hip action, which is one of the pillars of all karate technique.

Yoi

1. Turn 90° left into left zenkutsu dachi, left gedan barai, right chudan gyaku zuki.
2. Step into right zenkutsu dachi, left jodan gyaku zuki.
3. Turn 180° into right zenkutsu dachi, right gedan barai, left chudan gyaku zuki.
4. Step into left zenkutsu dachi, right jodan gyaku zuki.
5. Turn 90° into left zenkutsu dachi, left gedan barai.
6. Step into right zenkutsu dachi, right chudan zuki.
7. Step into left zenkutsu dachi, left chudan zuki.
8. Step into right zenkutsu dachi, right jodan zuki. Kiai!
9. Step back into left zenkutsu dachi, left chudan uchi uke.
10. Step back into right zenkutsu dachi, right chudan soto uke.
11. Step back into left zenkutsu dachi, left jodan uke.
12. Turn 90° left into left zenkutsu dachi, left gedan barai, right gedan gyaku zuki.
13. Step into right zenkutsu dachi, left chudan gyaku zuki.
14. Turn 180° into right zenkutsu dachi, right gedan barai, left gedan gyaku zuki.
15. Step into left zenkutsu dachi, right chudan gyaku zuki. Kiai!

Naore



- A* *Yoi* (Get ready!)
- B* (**Count 1: B-D**) Look to your left as the left foot moves 90o to the left side. Right arm covers the groin, while the left prepares for downward block, keeping the left elbow down.
- C* Left downward block (*gedan barai*) in left forward leaning stance.
- D* Immediately execute a right reverse punch to the middle.
- E* (**Count 2**) Step forward into right forward leaning stance and execute a left reverse punch to the face.

- F (Count 3: F-H)** Pull right foot straight back 180°. Look behind you and prepare for a downward block. The left hand covers the groin and the right hand is near the left ear.
- G** Execute right downward block in right front leaning stance.
- H** Immediately execute a left reverse punch to the stomach.
- I (Count 4)** Step forward into a left front leaning stance and execute a right reverse punch to the face.
- J (Count 5: J-K)** Look to your left as the left foot moves 90°. Cover the groin with the right hand and bring the left palm heel near the right ear.
- K** Step into left front leaning stance and execute a left downward block.
- L (Count 6)** Step into right front leaning stance and execute a right middle punch.
- M (Count 7)** Step into left front leaning stance and execute a left punch to the middle.
- N (Count 8)** Step into right front leaning stance and execute right punch to the face. Kiai!
- O (Count 9: O-P)** Pull the right leg straight back into left front leaning stance. Arms are crossed, preparing for a block. Elbows are parallel to the floor, and the left hand is near the right armpit.
- P** Execute a left middle inside block.
- Q (Count 10: Q-R)** Pull the left foot straight back, with the right hand behind your head and the left hand under the right armpit. Twist the body at the waist as you prepare to block, allowing the left heel to come up off the floor.
- R** Execute a right middle outside block, finishing in right front leaning stance.



- (Count 11: A-B)** Prepare for left overhead block as the right leg pulls straight back into left front leaning stance. Right arm covers the central vulnerable points of the body, while the left arm is outside the right, parallel to the floor. Don't block the vision with the right hand.



- B** Execute left overhead block.
- C (Count 12: L-E)** Look to your left as the left foot moves 90° to the left side. Right arm covers the groin, while the left prepares for a downward block, keeping the left elbow down.
- D** Left *gedan barai* in left forward leaning stance.
- E** Immediately execute a right reverse punch to the groin.
- F (Count 13)** Step forward into right front leaning stance. Execute left reverse punch to the stomach.
- G (Count 14: G-I)** Pull right foot straight back behind you 180°. Look behind and prepare for a downward block.
- H** Execute a right downward block in right front leaning stance.
- I** Execute a left reverse punch to the groin
- J (Count 15: J-K)** Step forward into left front leaning stance and execute a right reverse punch to the stomach. Kiai!
- K (Naore: K-L)** Maintain concentration and focus on the opponent. Pull the left leg back and in, covering the groin. The arms cross in front of the body, covering the vulnerable areas, with the left arm outside.
- L** Finish. (Starting position).



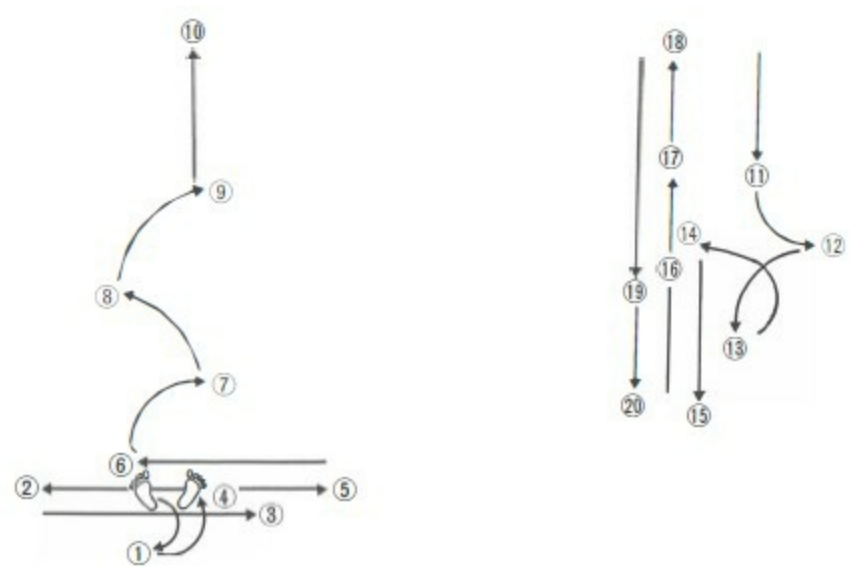
## Gekisai-Dai Kata

### Yoi

- 1 Left foot in, turn 90° into left sanchin dachi, left jodan uke.
- 2 Right zenkutsu dachi, right jodan zuki.
- 3 Right foot move back kiba dachi, left gedan barai.
- 4 Left foot move into right foot out to right sanchin dachi, right jodan uke.
- 5 Left zenkutsu dachi, left jodan zuki.
- 6 Left foot move back kiba dachi, right gedan barai.
- 7 Right foot come back to left, turn 90° to left, assume right sanchin dachi, right chudan uchi uke. Ibuki.
- 8 Left sanchin dachi, left chudan uchi uke. Ibuki.
- 9 Right sanchin dachi, right chudan uchi uke. Ibuki.
- 10 Left mae geri, come down to left zenkutsu dachi, left hiji jodan age, uraken shomen uchi, left gedan barai, right gedan gyakuzuki.

- 11. Right foot sweeps, right foot to kiba dachi, right shuto uchi uchi. Ibuki.
- 12. Left foot moves to left sanchin dachi, left chudan uchi uke. Ibuki.
- 13. Right sanchin dachi, right chudan uchi uke. Ibuki.
- 14. Right foot back to left sanchin dachi, left chudan uchi uke. Ibuki.
- 15. Right mae geri, come down to right zenkutsu dachi, right hiji jodan ate, right uraken shomen uchi, right gedan barai, left gedan gyaku zuki.
- 16. Left foot sweeps, left foot to kiba dachi, left shutouchi uchi. Kiai!
- 17. Right foot moves to right zenkutsu dachi, right hand down, morotezuki.
- 18. Left foot moves to left zenkutsu dachi, left hand down, morotezuki.
- 19. Left foot moves back, right zenkutsu dachi, right hand down, morote zuki.
- 20. Left heel moves, right foot back assume musubi dachi.

Naore





- A** Standing in normal stance (fudo dachi).
- B** Right foot moves in to the left. Stand with heels touching and toes open (musubi dachi). Hands are folded in front, with the right hand underneath. Eyes closed (mokuso).
- C** Yoi! (Get Ready!) Open the eyes. Come up on the balls of the feet. At the same time, the hands cross in front of the body with the right arm outside. Come down with the heels pointed out. Deep inhalation through the nose.
- D** **(Continued from C)** Lower both hands to the sides as you forcibly exhale with the mouth open (ibuki). Finish in parallel stance (heiko dachi).
- E** **(Count 1: E-F)** Left foot moves in a semi-circle, first in to the groin then out, as you pivot 90° to the left side, finishing in left sanchin dachi. Hands prepare for block.
- F** Execute left upper block
- G** **(Count 2)** Step forward into right front leaning stance and execute a right face punch.
- H** **(Count 3: H-J)** Pull the right leg straight back 180° behind you. Right hand covers the groin, while the left palm heel comes to the right ear.
- I** Twist the hips and come into straddle stance (kiba dachi).
- J** Execute a left gedan barai in kiba dachi.
- K** **(Count 4: K-L)** Look 180° to your right. Twist the right heel in, and pull the left foot in to cover the groin. Hands prepare to block.
- L** Left foot continue to move in a semi-circle (counter-clockwise), finishing in right sanchin dachi. Execute a right overhead block.



- A (Count 5)** Left foot steps forward into left front leaning stance. Execute a left face punch.
- B (Count 6)** Pull the left leg back 180° behind you. Left hand covers the groin while the right palm heel comes to the left ear. Execute a right lower block in kiba dachi.
- C (Count 7: C-E)** Moving in a semi-circle, the right foot covers the groin, as you prepare to move 90° to your left. Arms prepare to block. Right arm is under the left, and both arms are parallel to the floor. Inhale.
- D** Right foot moves into right sanchin dachi
- E** Execute right middle inside block, while exhaling forcibly with mouth wide open (ibuki).
- F (Count 8)** Inhale as your left leg moves forward into left *sanchin dachi*. Execute a left middle inside block, exhaling forcibly.
- G (Count 9)** Step forward into right sanchin dachi. Execute a right middle inside block. (similar to 7 and 8)
- H (Count 10: H-M)** Execute a high left front snap kick.
- I** Step down into left front leaning stance and execute a left rising elbow strike.
- J** Left uraken shomen uchi.
- K** Prepare for left lower block with the right hand covering the groin and the left palm heel by the right ear.
- L** Left lower block.
- M** Right reverse punch to the groin.



- A (Count 11: A-B)** Right foot sweeps the leg of an opponent directly behind you. Look over the right shoulder and prepare hands, with right hand inside, to strike 180° behind you.
- B** Execute right inside knife hand strike (shuto uchi-uchi) in kiba dachi. Left hand is closed, and the striking hand finishes about your eyes height. Kiai!
- C (Count 12)** Twist the right heel in and move the left leg up in a semicircle until your feet are shoulder width apart. Finish in left sanchin dachi. Execute left middle inside block with an ibuki.
- D (Count 13)** Bring the right foot up in a semi-circle (clockwise) and step forward into right sanchin dachi. Execute a right middle inside block with an ibuki.
- E (Count 14)** Step back into left sanchin dachi, by moving the right foot in a semicircle counterclockwise. Execute a left middle inside block with an ibuki.
- F (Count 15: F-G)** Execute a high right front snap kick
- G** Step down into right front leaning stance. Execute in rapid sequence: right rising elbow, right uraken shomen uchi, rightgedan barai, and left reverse punch to the groin.
- H (Count 16: H-I)** Left foot sweeps. Look over the left shoulder. Prepare the hands, left hand inside, to strike at opponent 180° behind you.
- I** Left shuto uchi-uchi in kiba dachi. Right hand closed. Kiai!
- J (Count 17)** Step forward into right front leaning stance. Pull both fists back to the chest and execute a double punch to the face (left) and to the middle (right).

**K (Count 18)** Step forward into left front leaning stance. Execute a double punch to the face(right) and to the middle(left).

**L (Count 19)** Step back into right front leaning stance and execute a double punch to the face(left) and to the middle(right).

**M (Count 20: M-O)** Right foot pulls back toward the left. Finish in an open-toed stance with the heels together. Hands cross just above the eyes with the right hand inside the left.

**N** Feet together in musubi dachi. Eyes open.

**O** Right foot steps off into fudo dachi. Naore and finish. (Starting position).

## 突・肘・型 *Tsuki no Kata*



**A** *Mokuso*

**B** Open the eyes.

**C** Yoi! Inhale, while raising up on the balls of the feet. Cross the arms in front.

**D** Forceful exhalation (ibuki), as the hands come down to the sides. Finish standing in heiko dachi (parallel stance).

**E (Count 1: E-H)** Right foot comes in to the left foot, covering the groin. Right hand also covers the groin as left hand prepares to block.

**F** Right foot steps back, at a 45° angle, into a straddle stance. Maintain same hand position.

**G** Execute a left lower block (gedan barai).

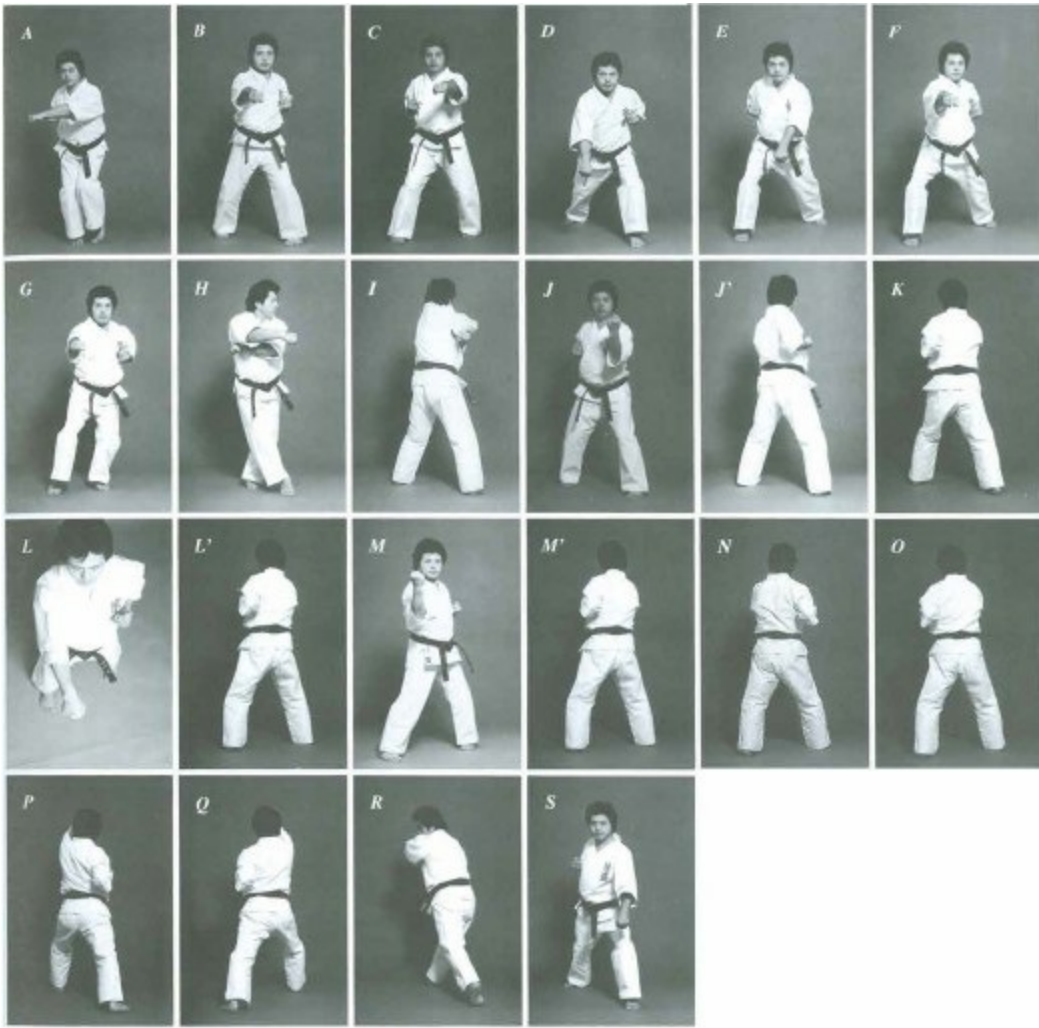
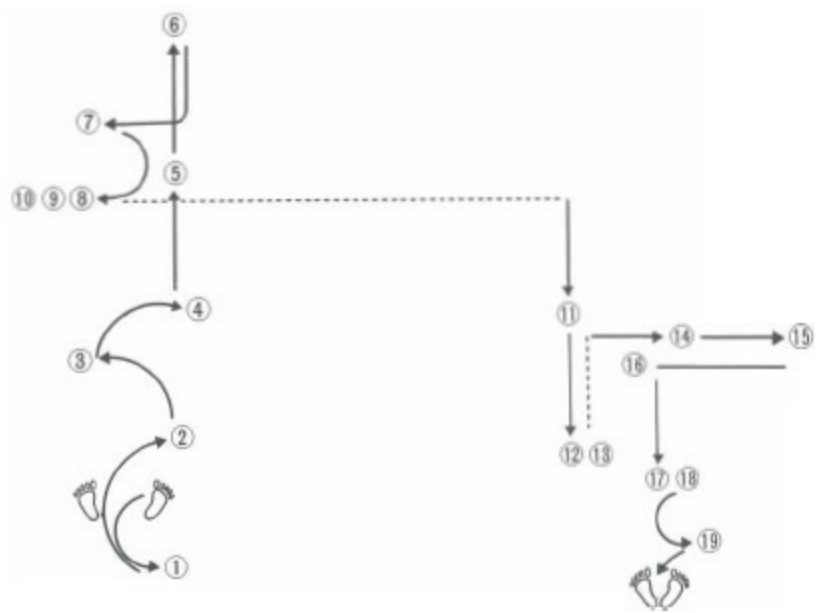
**H** Right straight punch across the chest.

**I (Count 2: I-K)** Right foot moves up to cover the groin. Looking over the right shoulder, left hand covers as the right hand prepares to block.



**J** Right leg moves forward, at a 45° angle, into kiba dachi.

**K** Left straight punch across the chest.



**A** (Count 3: A-B) Left foot pulls in to the right foot. Maintain the same hand position.

**B** Left foot moves in a semi-circle (counterclockwise), finishing shoulder width in left sanchin dachi. Execute a right middle punch.

- C (Count 4)** Right foot moves forward in a semi-circle into right sanchin dachi. Execute a left middle punch.
- D (Count 5)** Left foot steps forward into left front leaning stance. Execute a reverse punch to the groin.
- E (Count 6: E-F)** Right foot steps forward into right front leaning stance. Execute a left reverse punch to the groin.
- F** Immediately execute a right punch to the stomach.
- G (Count 7: G-K)** Right foot draws straight back, while keeping same hand position.
- H** Right foot moves straight across in front of left, stopping at about a shoulder width. Look over the left shoulder, preparing to block, with the left hand under the right.
- I** Pivot on the balls of the feet, 180° behind you, finishing in left sanchin dachi.
- J** Maintain the same stance with left middle inside block.
- J'** Back view of the technique.
- K** Execute a right reverse punch to the middle.
- L (Count 8: L-L')** Step forward into right sanchin dachi. Tighten the stomach and lower body.
- L'** Back view of the technique. (inset to above photo)
- M (Count 9: M-M')** Maintain the same stance. To a slow count of 5 (to yourself), execute a right circular block with the forearm, moving upward (clockwise). Finish with the fist about shoulder height.
- M'** Inset. Front view.
- N (Count 10: N-O)** Left middle punch in right sanchin dachi.
- O** Quickly follow with a right middle punch.
- P (Count 11)** Left foot steps forward into left front leaning stance, also executing a left punch to the face.
- Q (Count 12)** Right foot steps forward into right front leaning stance. Execute a right punch to the face.
- R (Count 13: R-S)** Look over the left shoulder, as the right hand covers the groin and the left palm heel is by the right ear. The left foot moves straight across to the right (double shoulder width).
- S** Pivot 180° and execute a left gedan barai in left front leaning stance.



**A (Count 14: A-E)** Maintain same hand position, and lift right leg, preparing to kick.

**B** Execute a right high front snap kick.

**C** Retract the right leg, pivoting on the left foot, 90° to your right. Keep the same hand position.

**D** Right leg slides into a straight line in front of the left leg, standing almost in a high front leaning stance. Let the left heel come up.

**E** Execute right kiba dachi side thrust punch.

**F (Count 15: F-J)** Left leg comes up to cover the groin, preparing to step in the same direction as the punch (to your right).

**G** Left leg steps in a straight line in front of the right leg, letting the right heel come up.

**H** Execute a left side thrust punch in kiba dachi.

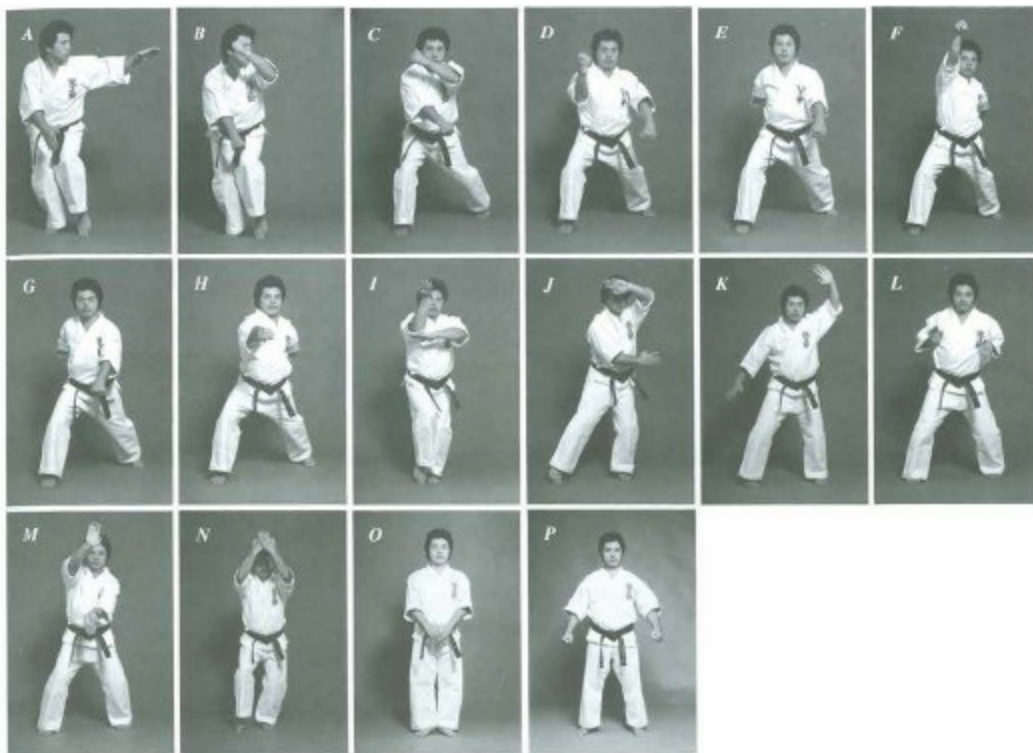
**I** The right heel comes in as the left arm swings 180° to your right, with the body twisting at the waist.

**J** Right side spear hand thrust in kiba dachi.

**K (Count 16: K-M)** Left foot comes up to the right, preparing to step straight ahead. Both hands are open.

**L** Keep the same hand position. Slide the left leg forward in a straight line until you are standing in a high front leaning stance. The right heel may come up.

**M** Twist with the hips and execute a left spear hand to the middle in kiba dachi. Both hands are open.



4

**A (Count 17: A-D)** Both hands are open. Right hand drops near the groin, as the left hand starts to pull in. Left foot moves to the right.

**B** Both hands close, as the stance is maintained.

**C** Left foot steps back into right front leaning stance.

**D** Execute a double block, with the upper (left) hand going down inside the right.

**E (Count 18: E-H)** Slowly pull the right hand back to the chest, while counting 1-5 to yourself.

**F** Immediately execute three techniques in rapid succession. Quick face punch with the right hand. Kiai on the punch.

**G** Left reverse punch to the groin.

**H** Right middle punch.

**I (Count 19: I-M)** Slide the right foot back, covering the groin. Both hands open. Left hand is under the right elbow.

**J** Right hand goes down inside the left, while the left hand circles above the head. The feet prepare for right sanchin dachi.

**K** Continue big circular blocks with both arms in right sanchin dachi.

**L** Inhale, as you pull both hands back to the chest. The right hand is fingertips up, while left hand is with fingertips pointed down.

**M** Right palm heel to the chin and left palm heel (inverted) to the lower abdomen, with a forceful exhalation (ibuki).

**(Count 20: N-P)** Left heel in, as the right foot pulls in toward the left. Finish in an open-toed stance as the hands cross just above

*N* the eyes. Right hand is inside the left.

*O* Musubi dachi. Eyes open.

*P* Right foot steps off into fudo dachi. Naore. Finish. (Starting position).



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## PRACTICE OF WEAPONS

### The Traditional Weapons of Karate

#### 1. Bo

The *bo* is a straight, cylindrical wooden staff, about six feet in length, with or without tapered ends. In the days when karate was practiced by farmers in Okinawa, the bo staff was used to carry pails of water, being slung over the top of the shoulders with pails on both sides.

#### 2. Jo

The *jo* is a straight, four-foot-long wooden staff that, in the early days of karate, was probably a walking cane.

#### 3. Sai

The *sai* is a short sword that evolved from a farm implement used to prepare a hole in the ground for a seed. Another tradition has it that the sai was originally a long, ladies' hair pin in Japan.

Karate students should study the practice of weapons so that in the event of being faced by an armed opponent, they can instinctively understand the types of strikes and thrusts they would have to counter. Also, in a practical self-defense situation, a student with a weapon, such as an umbrella, can extend his or her reach and expand the possibilities for counterattacking. Finally, weapons practice is another discipline that strengthens the mind and the technique.

In the Seido system, weapons are not used in practice until the student achieves the *shodan* ranking. Weapons are really extensions of the arms. The same techniques and principles used in unarmed techniques are used with weapons. Hence, the student is given the time to develop strong basic technique before being introduced to weapons. Also, in order to protect himself and others and to maintain the proper perspective, the student must demonstrate a certain degree of maturity in karate before being shown weapons. Basic technique is the foundation of karate practice and must be properly developed first.

### Basic Bo Kamae

FUDO NO KAMAE





The feet are shoulder-width apart, toes pointing outward. The bo is held in the right hand, supported by three fingers and thumb, with the index finger extended on top of the bo. The bo itself is pointed down, away from the subject, at a 45-degree angle to the ground.

**TACHI NO KAMAE**



Stand in *fudo dachi*. The bo is held in the right hand, with the arm extended and the bo held perpendicular to the ground.

**KUMITE NO KAMAE**



The feet are shoulder-width apart, with the right foot back, in *kokutsu dachi*. The left hand is in front on the bo and the right hand behind.

**GYAKU FUDO NO KAMAE**



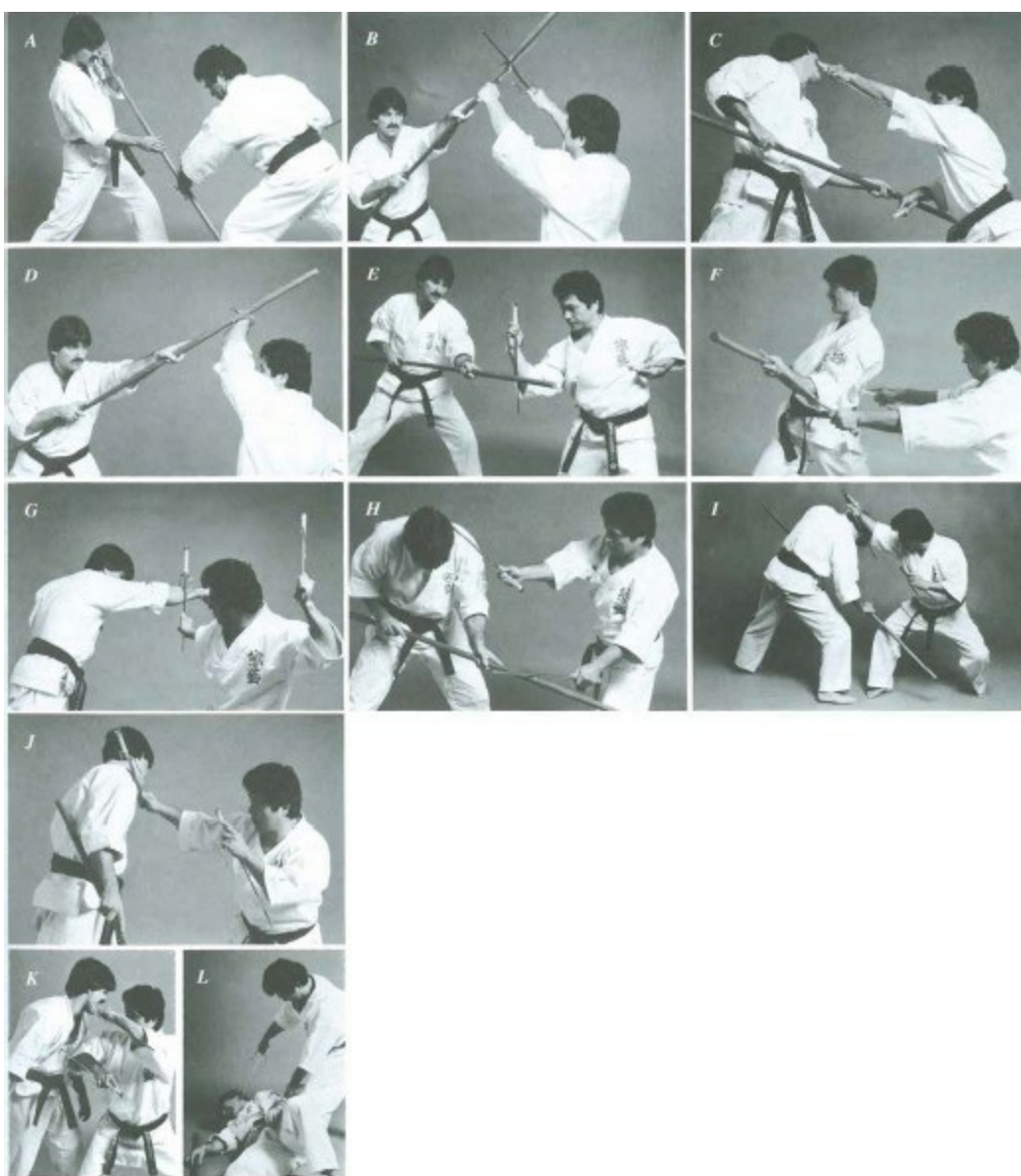
The feet are in the same position as above. Now the bo is oriented upward at a 45-degree angle, held away from the subject.

**KOKEN NO KAMAE**



The feet are in fudo dachi. The bo is pointed downward at a 45-degree angle to the ground. This time, the bo is supported by the right forearm from underneath; the right wrist is pushed up, away from the bo, as it would be for a *koken uke* (wrist block).

**Sai Techniques**

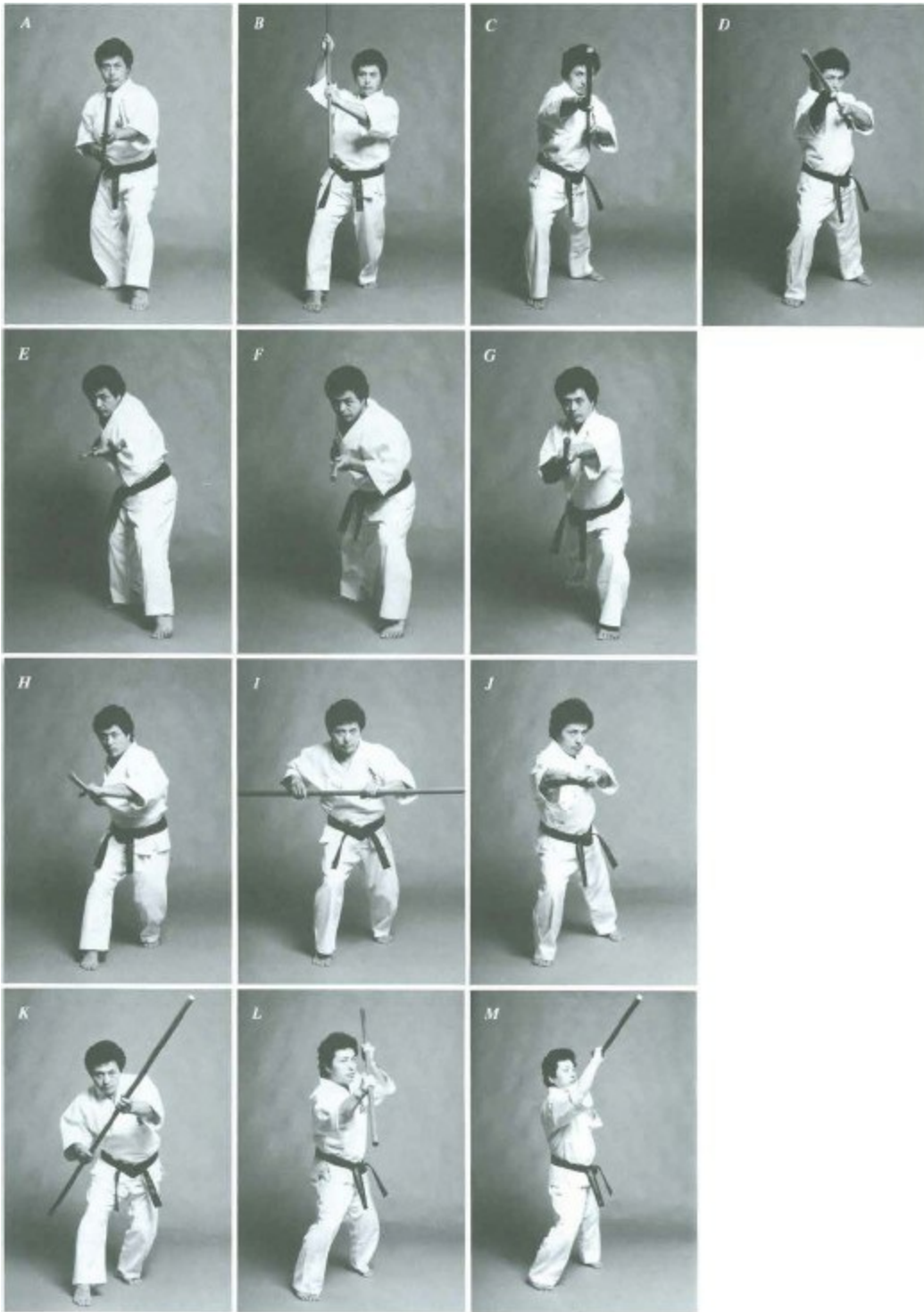


- A* Defending against a rising strike to the groin.
- B* Cross block overhead against a downward strike.
- C* Right downward block against abo tsuki, and countering with a left thrust to the face using the butt end of the sai.
- D* One armed overhead block using the blade of the sai.
- E* Outside block, using the sai blade, defending against a straight middle thrust.
- F* Blocking a thrust to the middle, by stepping to the side and blocking with the sai blade. Counter with butt end of sai to the spleen area.
- G* Blocking a face punch and pulling down with sai guard.
- H* Pushing down a middle thrust with left sai blade and countering to the head.
- I* Hooking behind the neck with the sai guard.
- J* Striking to the neck area with bottom of the sai blade.

*K* Double strike to the body (mid-section and face).

*L* Double strike, thrusting to neck and mid-section.

# Bo Offensive Techniques



*A* Starting position: Kumite no kamae.

*B* Step in with the right foot, raising the bo overhead.

- C** the top of head. Finish with right hand in front.
- D** Finishing position for downward strike, executed at a slight angle.
- E** Retract the bo.
- F** Begin shifting weight, and slide left foot forward.
- G** Finishing position for a thrust to the mid-section.
- H** Step forward with the right foot.
- I** Body begins twisting at the same time the bo comes around.
- J** Finish in a front-leaning stance, striking to the opponent's side.
- K** Put weight on the left leg. The right tip of bo begins an upward strike.
- L** Step forward with the right foot, continuing upward swing.
- M** Finish by bringing the bo all the way up.

## Bo against Jo



Two-handed overhead block against a straight downward strike to the head.



Defender counters with one-handed circular strike to side of the opponent's head.



Two-handed upper block, at a slight angle, against an angled downward strike.



Counter with the right tip of the jo to side of the opponent's head.



Against a straight thrust, execute a small circular block, clockwise.



Retract jo.



Slide in, shifting weight to front leg. Counter by sliding jo quickly with the right hand, thrusting to opponent's face.



Against a side strike, step back with the left foot, pivoting 180°. Block with two hands, using middle part of jo.



Continue pivoting another 90° on the left foot, as the hands follow.





Finish by thrusting the tip of jo to the mid-section.



Against an upward strike, step in with right foot. Execute a two-handed downward block, using middle of jo.



Pivot 90°, pushing the bo outward.



Continue pivoting another 90° on left foot. Look over the left shoulder.



Finish with a left back straight kick to the opponent's upper chest.

# Bo against Sai



Against a straight downward strike, use an upper cross block.



Counter by striking to side of the head with right sai.



Holding the blade of the sai, block an angled downward strike using the left sai.



Counter by striking opponent's head with handle of right sai.



Against a straight thrust, shift weight to back leg. Pull back, executing a downward block in front of the groin.



Shift weight to front leg, continuing to push the bo down.



Counter with a right thrust to the opponent's throat.



Against a side strike, left foot pivots 180°. Execute a double block, using the blades of the sais.



Palm facing up, thrust butt end of right sai into opponents face.



Option: continue to extend the right arm, hooking the back of opponent's head with prongs of sai. Pull down hard.



Against an upward strike, step forward with the right leg and execute a downward cross block.



Turn counterclockwise, almost 180°

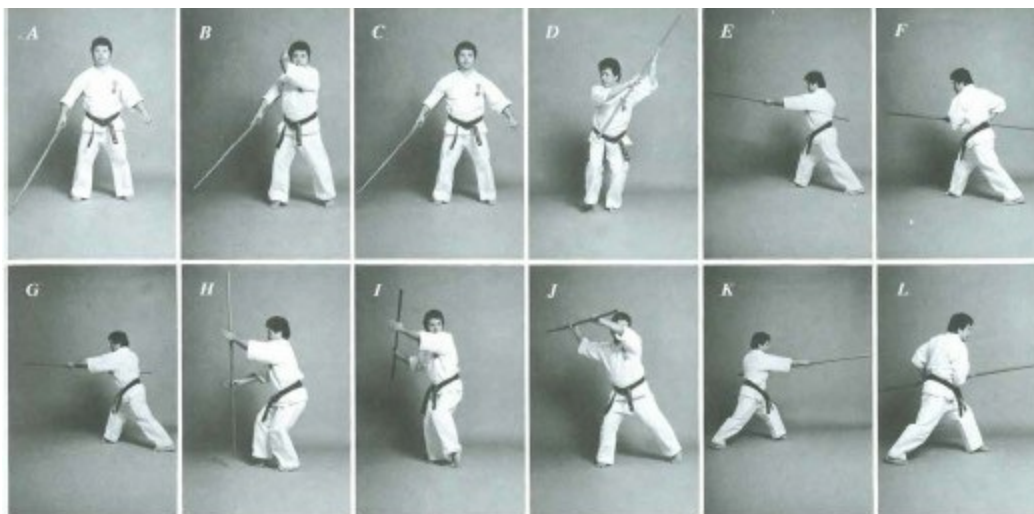


Both sais begin to swing in an arc, as the body continues to turn and the weight transfers to the front leg.



Finish with a double strike to the head area, with the blades of the sais.

## Bo Kata Chion



**A** Fudo dachi. Holding the bo in the right hand.

**B** Yoi (Get ready). Left hand to the right ear. Raise up on your heels.

**C** Left hand comes down to the side.

**D (Count 1: D-G)** Right foot moves in to the left foot, preparing to step off 90° to your right side. Bring the bo across the chest.

**E** Step into right front leaning stance and execute an overhead strike downward. The left hand is in front.

**F** Retract the bo on your right side.

**G** Execute abo tsuki, a thrust to the middle, with the left hand front.

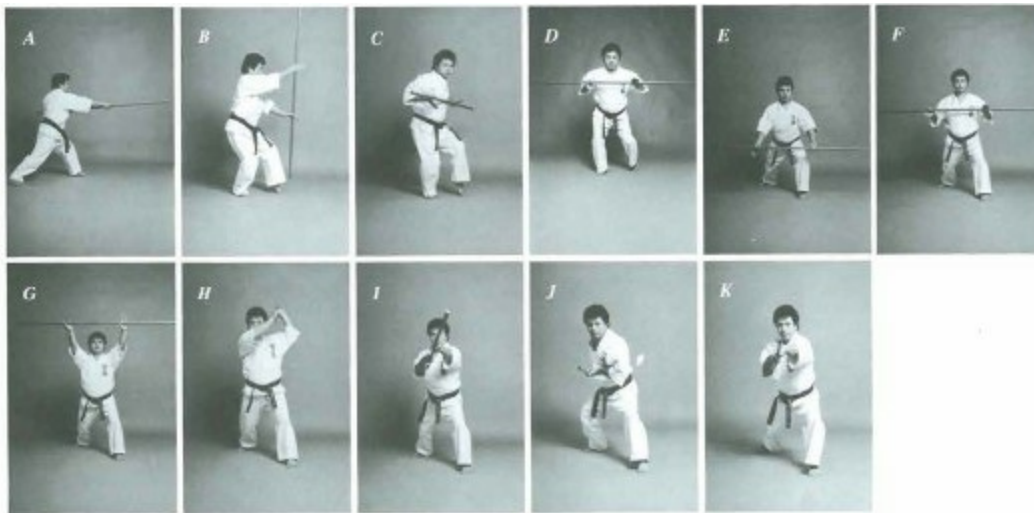
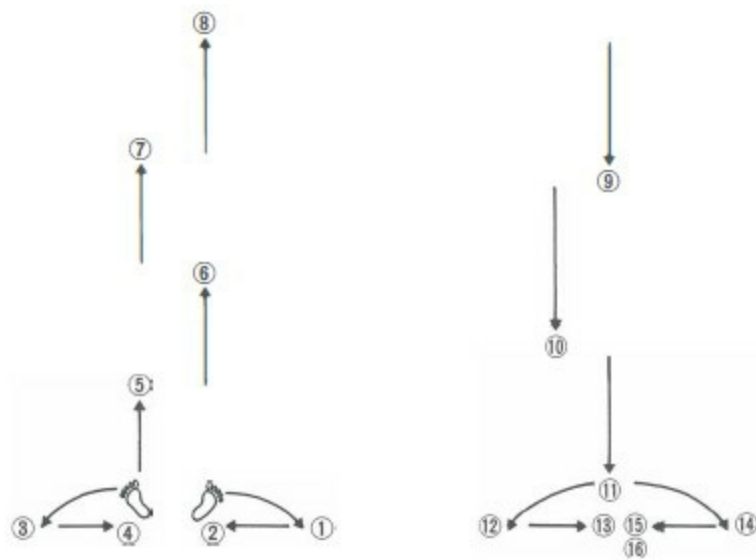
**H (Count 2)** Pull right foot back into right back leaning stance. Both hands are open, and the bo is held perpendicular to the floor. Retract the bo to the chest and block with the center of bo (tachi uke) Left hand is on top.

**I (Count 3: I-L)** Look over the left shoulder. The left foot covers the groin. Shift the weight to the right foot. Hands open.

**J** Raise the bo overhead, closing both hands around the bo. Left foot steps off to a shoulder width, preparing for left front leaning stance.

**K** Pivot 180° into left front leaning stance. Execute a downward overhead strike. The right hand is front.

**L** Retract the bo on the left side.



- A (Count 3 continued)** Thrust to the middle (bo tsuki), with the right hand forward.
- B (Count 4: B-D)** Pull back the left foot into left back leaning stance. Retract the bo on your left side, with the right hand top. Both hands are open. Block with the center of bo, which is held perpendicular to the ground.
- C** Maintain the same stance and retract the bo to the chest.
- D** Turn 90° to your right, pivoting on the balls of the feet.
- E (Count 5: E-K)** Step down into left front leaning stance. Execute a downward block with center of bo. Both hands are open, with the right palm up and the left palm down.
- F** Retract the bo to the chest. Keep the same hand position.
- G** Execute an overhead block with the center of the bo, which is horizontal.
- H** Change your grip by rotating both hands counterclockwise around the bo and twist the bo overhead.
- I** Execute a left overhead strike downward in left front leaning stance. The left hand is forward.

**J** Retract the bo while shifting the weight back with the hips.

**K** Thrust to the middle in left front leaning stance.



**A (Count 6: A-H)** Step forward into right front leaning stance. Retract bo to the chest in a horizontal position. Right palm down and left palm up.

**B** Horizontal block down in right front leaning stance.

**C** Pull bo back to the chest in the same stance.

**D** Execute a horizontal block overhead.

**E** Twist the bo overhead. The left hand is front.

**F** Execute a right overhead strike downward.

**G** Retract the bo, shifting the weight with the hips to the left leg.

**H** Thrust to the middle in right front leaning stance.

**I (Count 7: I-P)** Step forward into left front leaning stance. Pull bo back to the chest. Left palm is down and the right palm is up.

**J** Execute a downward block with the bo held horizontally.

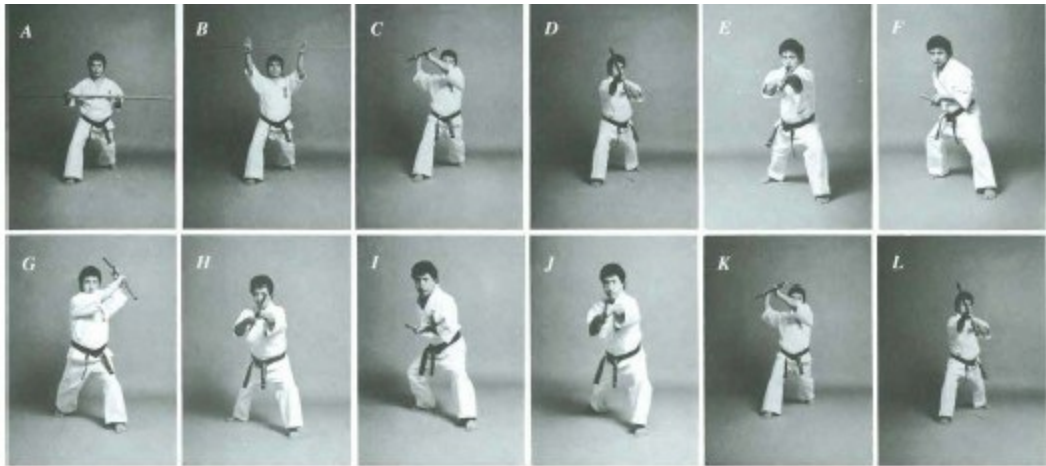
**K** Retract the bo to the chest, Maintain same hand position.

**L** Execute an overhead block, with the bo held horizontally.

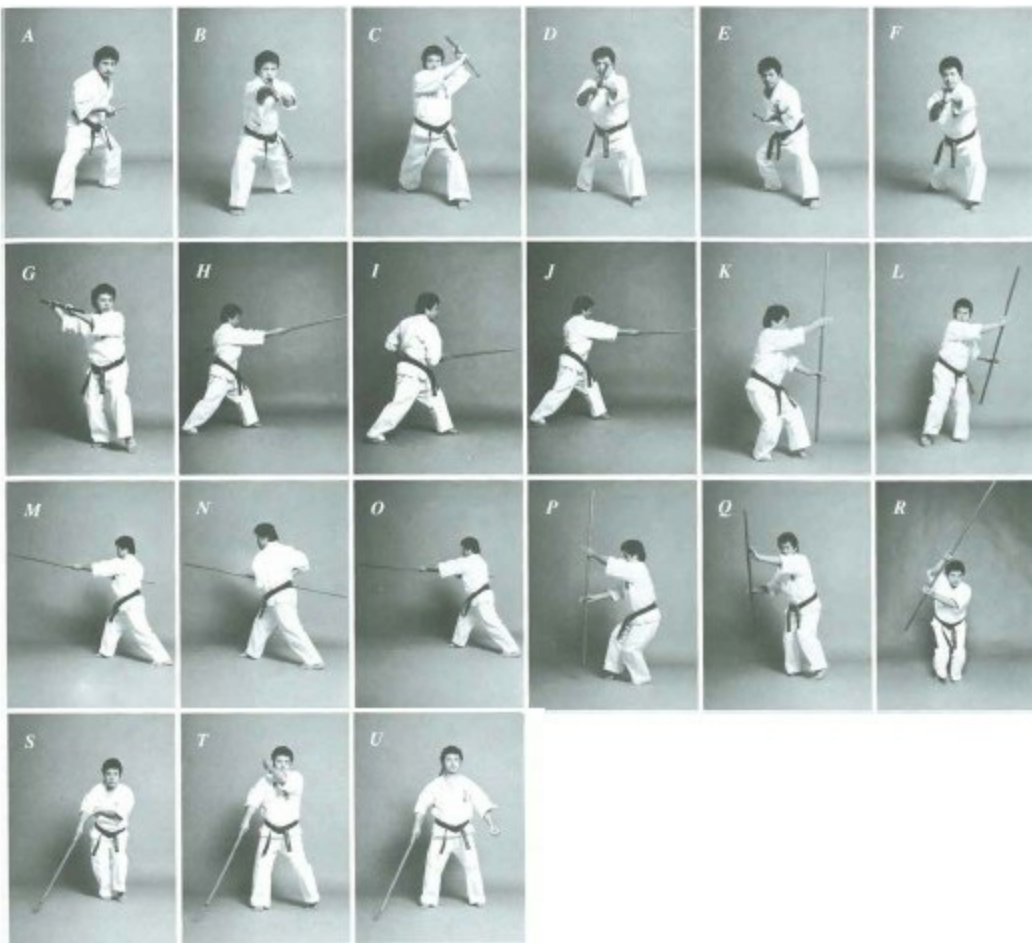
**M** Twist the bo overhead.



- N* Execute a downward overhead strike in left front leaning stance.
- O* Retract the bo while shifting the weight back on the right leg.
- P* Thrust to the middle in left front leaning stance.
- Q* **(Count 8: Q-R)** Step forward into right forward leaning stance. Retract to the chest in a horizontal position. Right palm down and left palm up.
- R* Horizontal block down in right front leaning stance.



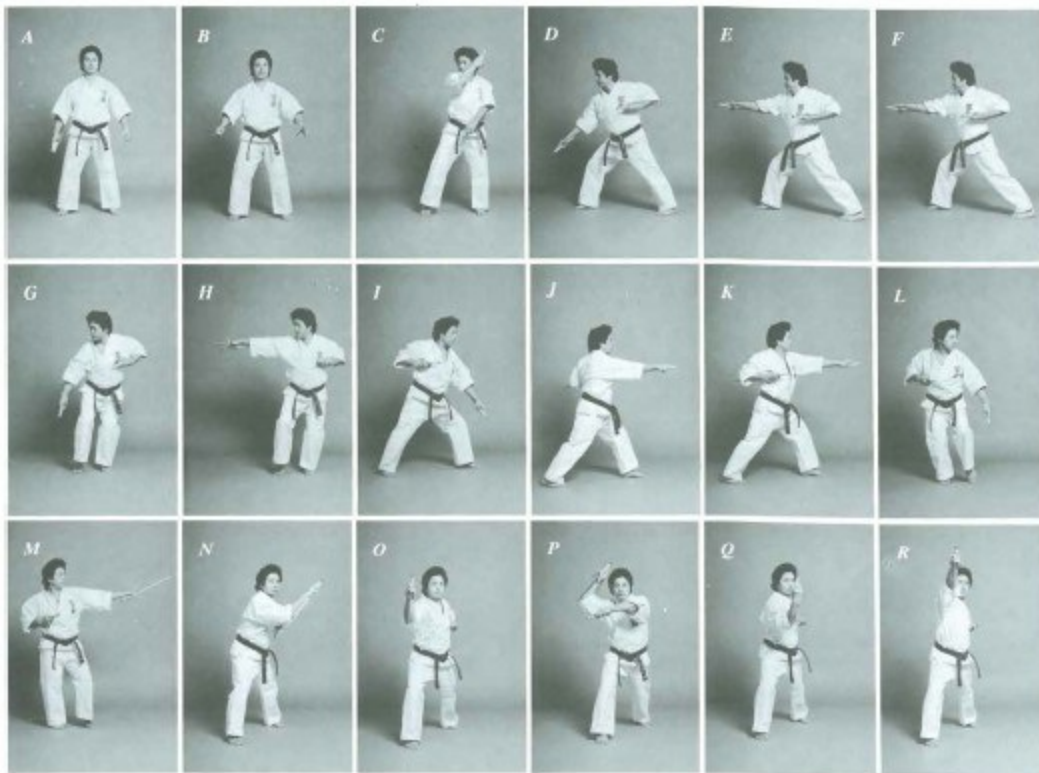
- A* **(Count 8 continued: A-F)** Pull bo back to the chest in the same stance.
- B* Execute a horizontal block overhead.
- C* Twist the bo overhead. The left hand is front.
- D* Execute a right overhead strike downward.
- E* Retract the bo, shifting the weight with the hips to the left leg.
- F* Thrust to the middle in right front leaning stance. Kiai!
- G* **(Count 9: G-J)** Step back with the right leg, raising the bo overhead.
- H* Execute a left overhead strike downward in left front leaning stance. The right hand is forward.
- I* Retract the bo and shift the weight back onto the right leg.
- J* Thrust to the middle in left zenkutsu dachi.
- K* **(Count 10: K-L)** Step back with the left foot, raising the bo overhead.
- L* Execute a right overhead strike downward in right front leaning stance.



- A (Count 10 continued: A-B)** Retract the bo and shift weight onto the left leg.
- B** Thrust to the middle in right front leaning stance with the right hand forward.
- C (Count 11: C-F)** Right foot steps straight back. Raise the bo over the left shoulder. Left hand is front and right hand is behind.
- D** Left overhead downward strike in left front leaning stance
- E** Retract bo and shift weight to right leg.
- F** Left middle thrust in left front leaning stance.
- G (Count 12: G-J)** Pull back the left leg to cover the groin. Prepare to step off 90° to your left. Raise the bo over your shoulder, look to your left.
- H** Step off into left front leaning stance. Execute a right reverse strike downward. (right hand is forward)
- I** Retract the bo on the left side.
- J** Reverse thrust to the middle (right hand top) in left front leaning stance.
- K (Count 13)** Pull left leg back into kokutsu dachi. Retract bo to chest and execute a block with bo perpendicular to the floor (tachi uke).

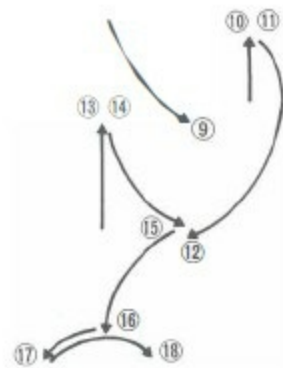
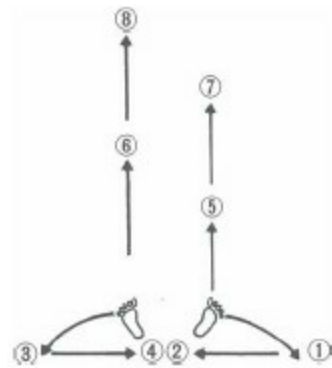
- L (Count 14: L-O)** Look over the right shoulder while the right foot prepares to pivot 180°. The bo is prepared for a strike.
- M** Pivot 180° into right front leaning stance. Execute a left reverse strike downward.
- N** Retract the bo on the right side.
- O** Reverse thrust to the middle in right front leaning stance. (left hand is forward) Kiai!
- P (Count 15)** Pull right foot back into right back leaning stance. Retract bo to chest and execute tachi uke.
- Q (Naore: Q-U)** Maintain same bo position and pivot to your left 90°.
- R** Raise bo overhead to almost horizontal position. Draw left foot in to cover the groin.
- S** Continue circular movement of bo counterclockwise over the head. Left hand is under the bo near the right elbow. Right hand holds the bo, and the left foot covers the groin.
- T** Left foot steps off and left hand comes to right ear.
- U** Finish. (Starting position).

## Sai Kata Ganki-Dai



- A** Standing in normal stance (fudo dachi) with both sais in the right hand.
- B** Yoi. Left hand to the right ear. Left hand down to the side and take one sai from the right hand.

- C** (Count 1: *C-F*) Step 90° to the right side into a forward leaning stance.
- D** Execute a right downward block.
- E** Left middle punch.
- F** Right middle punch.
- G** (Count 2: *G-H*) Pull right leg back into back leaning stance.
- H** Right hand executes a horizontal strike (suihei uchi) with the blade out.
- I** (Count 3: *I-K*) Left leg moves. Pivot 180°. Put weight on front leg as you move into front leaning stance. Execute left downward block.
- J** Execute a right middle punch.
- K** Execute a left middle punch.
- L** (Count 4: *L-M*) Pull left leg back into a back leaning stance.
- M** Left hand executes a horizontal strike with the blade out.
- N** (Count 5: *N-R*) Right foot moves as you pivot 90° into front leaning stance.
- O** Right middle inside block.
- P,**  
**Q** Execute a right middle outside block.
- R** Thrust butt end of sai to the head area, with right hand.





**A (Count 5 continued: A-B)** Left middle punch.

**B** Right middle punch.

**C (Count 6: C-I)** Step forward into left forward leaning stance, while preparing the hands.

**D** Execute a left middle inside block.

**E** Prepare the hands while twisting the body.

**F** Execute a left middle outside block.

**G** Left hand thrusts butt end of sai to the head area.

**H** Right middle punch.

**I** Left middle punch.

**J (Count 7: J-P)** Step into right front leaning stance. Prepare for right overhead block.

**K** Execute a right overhead block.

**L** Using the sai guard, hook the opponent's neck.



*M* Swing the sai overhead.

*N* Strike with the right hand to the side of opponent's head.

*O* Left middle thrust punch.

*P* Right upper thrust punch.

*Q* (Count 8: *Q-W*) Step into left front leaning stance. Prepare hands for block.

*R* Execute left overhead block.

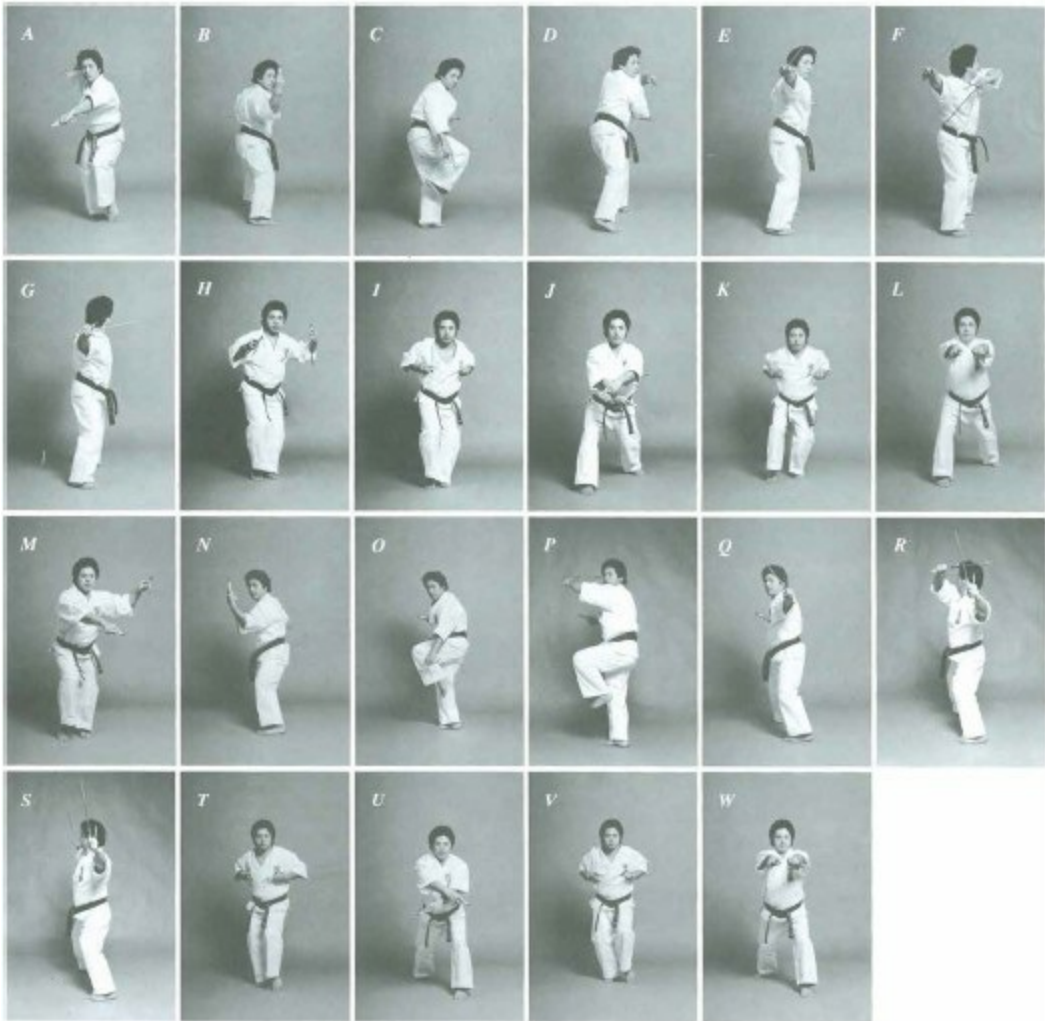
*S* Using the sai guard, hook the opponent's neck.

*T* Swing the sai overhead.

*U* Left strike to the side of opponent's head.

*V* Right middle thrust punch.

*W* Left upper thrust punch. Kiai!



*A* (Count 9: *A-B*) Left foot prepares to move straight back. Hands prepare for block.



**B** Execute a right middle outside block in straddle stance (*kiba dachi*).

**C (Count 10: C-G)** Lift the right leg and execute right lower block.

**D** Draw back the right hand.

**E** Execute right horizontal strike to the head area in kiba dachi.

**F** Prepare for left horizontal strike by drawing the left hand back.

**G** Left strike to the head area with blade of sai. Finish in kiba dachi with both hands extended.

**H (Count 11: H-L)** Draw right foot back and pivot to face forward.

**I** Retract both sais to the chest.

**J** Execute a double downward cross block (*juji uke*), with right hand under, in front leaning stance.

**K** Draw right leg back a little and bring both sais to chest.

**L** Slide right foot into front leaning stance and execute double middle thrust, using butt ends of sais.

**M (Count 12: M-N)** Right foot prepares to move straight back as hands prepare for block.

**N** Execute left middle outside block in kiba dachi.

**O (Count 13: O-S)** Lift the left leg and execute a left downward block.

**P** Draw back the left hand.

**Q** Execute a left horizontal strike.

**R** Prepare for right strike by drawing the right hand back.

**S** Right horizontal strike to head area. Finish in kiba dachi with both hands extended.

**T (Count 14: T-W)** Draw left foot back, facing forward, and retract both sais to chest.

**U** Execute a double downward cross block, left hand under, in front leaning stance.

**V** Draw left leg back slightly while pulling both sais back to the chest.

**W** Slide left foot into front leaning stance and execute double middle thrust with butt ends of sais.



**A (Count 15: A-C)** Draw back left leg, holding sais at shoulder level with blades out, preparing to strike.

**B** Slowly step back 45°, twisting the body to strike behind to your left (southwest direction) with both sais to the side of the head.

**C** Quickly twist back and execute a double strike to side of the head, at an opponent along the same 45° diagonal (northeast), to your right.

**D (Count 16: D-F)** Draw right leg back, covering the groin, holding sais at shoulder level, blades out, preparing to strike.

**E** Right foot steps off at 45° angle (southeast direction), twisting the body to strike slowly to your right, with both sai blades.

**F** Quickly twist the body to your left (northwest direction) and execute a quick double strike. Kiai!

**G (Count 17: G-I)** Lift left leg into a crane stance (tsuruashi dachi), and execute a left downward strike with blade of sai.

**H** Rotate sai in left hand. As left foot moves into front leaning stance, execute a left downward block. Draw right sai back to the chest.

**I** Execute right reverse thrust downward.

**J (Count 18: J-M)** Lift right leg into a crane stance, preparing right hand for downward strike.

**K** Execute right downward strike with left hand at the chest.

**L** Rotate sai in the right hand, executing right downward block with blade in. Right foot comes forward into front leaning stance.

**M** Left reverse thrust downward.

**N (Naore: N-Q)** Draw up left leg, placing both sais in the right hand.

***O*** Face front.

***P*** Left foot steps off into normal stance with both sais held at the side in the right hand. Left hand begins to make a fist.

***Q*** Finish. (Starting position).



## Toh Kon (Fighting Spirit)



*“Know thy foe and know thyself” In a hundred battles, you will never know defeat.*

*Know thyself and know not thy foe: The outcome will be pure chance.*

*Know neither thy foe nor thyself: In a hundred battles, you will never taste the fruits of victory.”*

Karate is a martial art. Therefore, free fighting (kumite) is an expression of the art’s origins and basic purpose. Since karate is not an adversarial sport, there are no real winners and losers in kumite. Although points may be kept for the purpose of a match, the real purpose is to allow each individual a chance to express something of himself or herself.

The way you fight reflects not only your physical ability and technique, but also your spirit and attitude. Kumite can teach us a lot about dealing with life’s challenges. When you are sparring with an opponent, for example, you must watch his eyes at all times. If you don’t face your opponent, then he will seem more menacing and formidable than he really is. The same can be said of any problem, say of a financial or personal nature. Kumite gives us a chance to understand by experience what seems to be a folksy saying.

Suppose you are continually hit in the ribs. You feel pain. You might continually get hit in the face. Do you shy away and say, “That’s enough! I’ve had it with this fighting?” How do you react? Do you give up, claiming injury? Karate should teach you to use your mind. Stop and think. If you’re getting hit, why are you not blocking? Maybe you are standing too still. Maybe by just a small adjustment, such as moving from side to side, you won’t get hit so badly. The point is that when something is not working, change strategy. We must make adjustments. Many times in our business careers we find the same thing; perhaps our way of dealing with our bosses or subordinates does not work. Be flexible, be adaptable. Experiment, analyze, change.



Injuries can be serious detriments to our training. However, they can also be an excuse for not facing up to some things we don't like. "I can't do push-ups because my arm hurts. Well, you can strengthen your good arm while you let the injured one rest. If you've sprained one foot, change sides and use the other one. If you're sparring and you've hurt your legs, use only your hands. If you hurt your hands, use your teeth on your opponent. Seriously, the point I'm trying to make to students is that everything that happens can be taken as a challenge. Most students do not like *kumite*. But it can be an opportunity to test the sincerity and progress of our basic training. With time and experience, it can be enjoyable.



三位一体

## Sanmi Ittai

When doing zazen or when free fighting, there are three inseparable elements that must be perfected in harmonious unison as follows.

調身

Cho Shin

This refers to the physical aspects of the practice. In zazen, this means the posture: the physical way in which we hold our body. In kumite, this means keeping a flexible, balanced stance and maintaining the right distance (*maai*) from the opponent at all times.

調息

Cho Soku

This refers to the proper breathing. In zazen and kumite, this means we must keep the breathing free from tension and anxiety. In zazen, the breathing can be slow and deep; in kumite, it must be controlled, and coordinated with our movements.

## 調心 Cho Shin

Controlling the mind is perhaps the most difficult aspect of karate, whether in zazen or kumite. In zazen, the mind wanders, unconsciously trying to deter us from the single-pointed concentration that we need to look deep into ourselves. In kumite, the mind is usually beset by fear, tension and insecurity, which makes it extremely difficult to fight with free and spontaneous movements.

It does not matter if we are in moments of calm silence or in moments of intense action, the same harmony among these three elements must be achieved and maintained. The struggle to do this naturally is the essence of true karate training.



## Definition & Purpose of Kumite

Kumite, along with basics and kata, completes the triad of karate training. Karate is a martial art, developed and refined through the centuries as a form of unarmed physical combat, used often by an unarmed citizenry to defend itself against foreign occupation forces and bandits.

Today the martial spirit lives on in the practice of kumite, and the benefits of kumite to the modern practitioner are many. Kumite practice hones selfdefense skills. It brings together all of the techniques and skills the karate-ka has acquired, sharpening his timing and reflexes, increasing endurance and building confidence. The practice of kumite inspires a bushido (nonquitting spirit) and trains the mind to remain calm and focused under pressure.

The approach to kumite varies greatly among styles. In some, a white belt will take part in full free fighting soon after joining the school. Other styles engage in no free fighting, but instead practice prearranged fighting. The approach of the Seido system is to introduce the student to fighting in a way that promotes the development of strong fighting skills, enhances confidence, and provides for a safe and supportive atmosphere. In Seido karate a student does not engage in full free fighting until he or she attains the grade of green belt. However, the Seido practitioner embarks on the building of fighting skills from his very first class.

Basic techniques are the foundation of a practitioner's fighting arsenal. Strong blocks, kicks and punches are the rudiments of kumite. Though many basic techniques are modified for free fighting purposes, it is only after long hours devoted to the repetition of basics that the karateka can forge his hand and foot techniques into dependable weapons.



**Kihon Kumite:** Consists of a number of prearranged movements to be performed by an individual. The purpose of *kihon kumite* is to bridge the gap between basics and free fighting. Practical, effective fighting combinations are learned, with the basic blocks, hand techniques, and kicks adapted and modified to improve their fighting efficiency. For example, when utilizing the reverse punch in kumite, the reaction hand is not pulled all the way back to the side as it is in informal practice. Rather, it is drawn next to the chin to protect the face, power thus being sacrificed for defense. Stances are also modified to increase flexibility and mobility.

**Yakusoku Kumite:** These too are prearranged movements, but *yakusoku kumite* is practiced with another person, with each partner alternating rapidly between offensive and defensive techniques. In the yakusoku kumite the student is exposed to controlled contact, applies the blocks he has learned in a realistic combat situation, and learns to attack and counter quickly and forcefully. Practicing with a partner also teaches the importance of proper timing and *maai* (the distance between yourself and your opponent).

**Tanshiki Kumite:** This form of fighting is a modified form of full free fighting, in which the instructor limits the techniques that can be used. For example, one of the participants may be directed to kick only, while his opponent uses only hand techniques. Or one side may just block, while the other side uses two or three specified kicks. The student gets concentrated exposure to a specific technique (for example, the roundhouse kick) and develops his blocks and counters to a point where they are automatic. For new students, it is also a way to learn control and avoid injury.

**Jiyu Kumite** (free fighting): In full free fighting the student utilizes his/her skills under conditions that most closely simulate actual combat. In the Seido system, controlled contact is permitted to the body. **Jiyu Kumite** is viewed as a chance for students to exchange techniques, to learn from each other. Beyond the physical demands of kumite (agility, technique), it is an important way to test the degree of mental control and discipline that the student has achieved.

## Precautions

Free fighting offers the karate-ka many opportunities to develop his skill, courage, and bushido spirit. On the other hand, if not properly controlled, it also can lead to discouragement and injury. It is therefore of paramount importance that there be close supervision of kumite at all times and that the students be carefully instructed as to the true purpose of kumite and the proper attitude required.

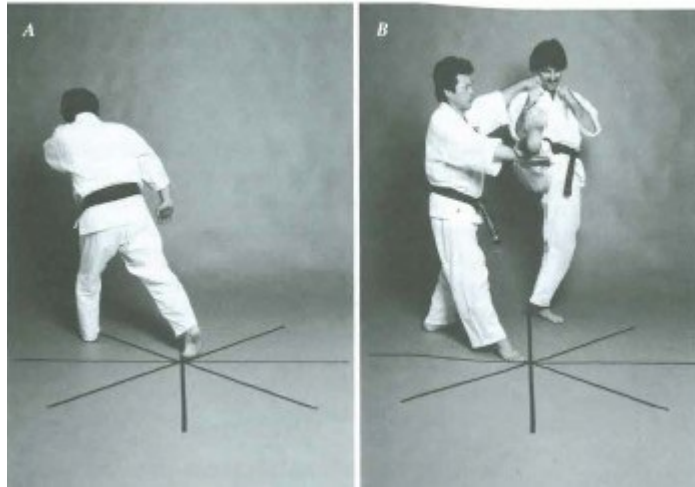
In actual combat, the importance of winning is obvious. In kumite, however, it is necessary for the student to understand what winning means. Karate is an endeavor of personal growth. The karate-ka who at every moment is doing the best he or she can is a winner. When students compete in kumite, by putting forth their best effort, they can spur each other to greater effort. While on the one hand they are competitors, on the other they are partners in learning and growth.

One of the great values of kumite is that it presents the karate-ka with a unique opportunity to confront himself. An unhealthy ego, anger, and fear are elusive demons within us, often disguising themselves as false rationales or second-hand emotions. In kumite we are forced to face ourselves, as well as our opponent; our fear, and anger and ego often become our most formidable opponents. This can make kumite an emotional and sometimes uncomfortable experience. But the karate-ka should not allow this to turn him away from kumite, for it is his challenge to confront these problems.

## Maai (Distance)

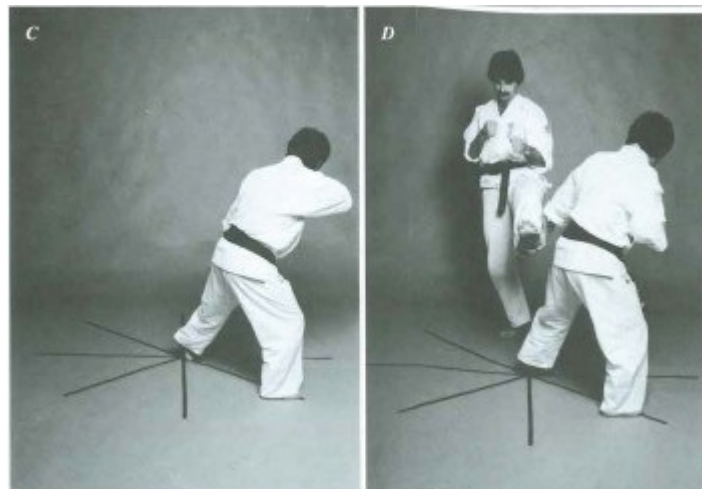
In kumite, the distance between the opponent and yourself is something that must be constantly monitored and adjusted. Distance can be chosen to allow use of your favorite offensive techniques or to make the opponent use techniques that he does not favor. Use of maai is individual to each person's fighting style, and it also depends on the relative sizes of the two fighters. For example, someone who favors arm techniques will generally tend to choose a close or intermediate distance from the opponent. Someone who likes kicks, perhaps jumping or spinning ones, will prefer to fight at a good distance from the opponent.

It is important for the student to understand the use of maai by experience in different situations with different opponents. In Seido, this is one of the functions of kihon kumite and yakusoku kumite.



*A* Defensive position sliding forward at a 45° angle.

*B* Application of defensive position and counter with face punch.



*C* Defensive position sliding backward at a 45° angle.

*D* Application of defensive position to ward off a front snap kick. Note how the body is twisted to avoid contact to center weak points of the body.

## Sabaki (Body & Foot Movements)



Picture shows twisting your body and sliding back at a 45° angle with the back leg. Most of your weight is on the back leg.



Avoid opponent attack by sliding back. Back leg slides back first then front leg follows remaining in the same back leaning stance when finished.



Same as position (top, left) but opposite side.



This position shows avoiding attack by sliding horizontal with the back leg with one knee bent and the other leg straight.



Starting position. Back leaning stance both hands close d. This fighting position is called Soshu no kamae.



Same technique is done to the other side but using the front leg to slide horizontal.



Going diagonal sliding your front leg 45° front. This position can put you in a closer position to your attacker.



Same as position (top, center) but opposite side.



Same as position (bottom, left) but opposite side.

Basic karate practice emphasizes the use of the hands, arms and legs in blocking techniques, to protect the vital areas. However, the ability to shift and quickly rotate the trunk greatly enhances the effectiveness of basic blocks. *Tai-sabaki* requires the shoulders to be loose and free from tension, flexibility in the waist and oblique muscles, and strong abdominal muscles that can twist the torso sharply and quickly.

If *maai* is something dynamic and fluid, which constantly changes during *kumite*, it follows that good foot movement (*ashi-sabaki*) is the key to effective offense and defense. The photos illustrate the variety of possible footwork against various attacking techniques.



Summer Camp Training at Zen Mountain Center, upstate New York.



Father and son. Akira Nakamura.



Children's demonstration at headquarters, 1985. All participants received a trophy.



Nakamura family are welcomed by Seido students.



## KARATE MEDITATION LECTURES



Opening of Annual Seido Karate Women's Seminar, headquarters, 1985.

At each meditation class, after doing zazen and walking meditation, I give students a short lecture. These talks stress the simple, but important, themes that underlie karate practice. Several of these lectures are reproduced in this chapter. It is my hope that the reader, whether a karate student or not, will find something of value in these lectures and gain some understanding of karate's true significance.

親・恩

**Oya No On**

**(Be thankful to your parents)**



We often hear the saying, “Without our parents, we wouldn’t be here.” It is very important that we always appreciate our parents and what they have done for us; I want all my students to be thankful for their parents. In my own personal experience, I marvel at how my parents took care of the physical, mental and spiritual development of me, my brothers and sisters.

As a bachelor, I felt that I had a proper appreciation of my parents. Later, when I married, I thought to myself, “Now, I really appreciate them properly. When I had a child of my own, I felt, At last, I can fully appreciate what my parents did.” I want to make the point that the love and respect one has for one’s parents is something that grows and deepens with our own maturity and understanding of life.

We are always urged to remember our parents at Christmas, Mother’s Day and Father’s Day with a present. Sometimes, we worry because we cannot afford to give them as fancy or expensive a present as we would like. There is one gift we can give our parents, that is, I feel, the **best** present any child can give to his or her parents. That gift is to be **healthy** ourselves—to be strong and happy. Our bodies are a gift from our parents. To maintain that body, to nourish it and make it strong and fit, is an appreciation of that gift. If We develop our bodies, we are also more likely to develop, along with it, a strong pirt, which leads to a unified and happy individual.

This is what our parents really want, for us to be healthy and happy. If we go around with a long face and a morose attitude about everything—“My job is lousy, I can’t find a nice apartment,” “I’m not feeling well,”—parents take this personally. They feel that it is somehow **their** fault. It is their greatest joy an? reward, the true crowning achievement of all their effort, if they can point to their children and say that they are healthy in body and in spirit.

If we are healthy, we are also in a better position to recognize and accept life’s opportunities. When we train at the dojo, we are doing it for our own growth and development, but we are also doing it as an act of thankfulness to our parents for giving us whole and healthy bodies that can be trained to higher levels.

謙讓、美德

**Kenjo No Bitoku**

**(With true strength comes humility)**

The characters mean the virtue of humility. Humility is an essential characteristic of the samurai and of the karate student. Without humility, karate can be used for destructive purposes, and this can give the public a bad impression. Humility comes with the realization that though we can make our bodies strong, we always remain relatively weak. Man is one of the weakest members of all the animal kingdom, and we are subject to all kinds of disease and bodily ailments. Age is an opponent that none of us can be victorious against. So when one walks around either in the dojo or outside the dojo with a jaunt air of overconfidence, that person displays an ignorance of life and of himself. Excessive loudness, bragging, disrespect and bullying are all attributes of the person who lacks humility. We strive to make our bodies as strong as possible, and, more importantly, we strive to make our spirits and characters strong. This strength when combined with the virtue of humility, leads to the bushido spirit. For the samurai is strong yet weak, confident yet never overconfident, and always carries a proper perspective of himself in relation to the world around him. The karate student should strive for this same perspective.



## Oshi Shinobu Osu

**(Be patient with yourself and with others)**

*Osu* is made up of two character. The second character conveys the idea of *shinobu*, patience. The first character means to keep, or to maintain. Therefore, *osu* means to be patient, in this context.



*Osu* is a word that we have all used hundreds of times in our training at the dojo. To some of us, it means nothing more than something we have been told to say to our seniors and to the teachers. Without more understanding, its use can become mechanical.

In its basic sense, *osu* is a greeting that we use for our fellows and for our seniors. It is also a sign of respect, both for people and for the dojo. *Osu* is used to convey the message of greeting and the sense of respect to others; it also has an important message for the person using the word.

Each time we use the word *osu* we should be reminding ourselves to have patience, or *shinobu*. It is very easy to allow ourselves to lose patience. When the weather is hot and uncomfortable, some students arrive at the dojo feeling irritated; it is very easy to say to ourselves, “Today, I have no patience because I’m feeling uncomfortable and pressured.” Then, we allow ourselves to treat our fellows with disrespect. This is wrong, and we say *osu* to remind ourselves that we should not let this happen.

Patience applies to the correct concept of training, the one that I want all my students to follow. The purpose of karate training is to train the body—to make it strong and powerful. This is not approached in isolation. The body is trained by training the mind. When the mind and body are strong, this leads to a unification that produces a strong spirit, which is the real goal of karate training. A strong spirit produces a harmonious individual. Achieving this goal, through the right training, requires patience. Each time we say *osu* we are reaffirming our determination to achieve the real purpose of karate.

It is common to hear people talk about chance in life. Some people lament the lack of opportunity and feel sorry for themselves, while others wait passively for the right chance or opportunity. I do not want my students to wait for opportunity or chance in their lives. If we are patient and strong, we shall perceive many more chances and opportunities than we ever did before, and we should take these. This applies to all my students, those who are musicians, lawyers, doctors, or other specialists. If we are patient, we can better assess what life is offering us. Many times, opportunities to advance

and grow are offered to us, but we turn them aside, not recognizing them for what they are. Don't wait for "chance" and say to yourself, "Something will come along." With patient and persistent effort in your training and in your professional life, you will be in a position to recognize when to actively take the opportunities that life offers to each one of us.

Be patient with yourself and with others. Let yourself grow and develop, and allow your training to have time to take effect. Remind yourself of these ideas constantly. Each time you greet your *sensei*, your seniors and your fellows with *osu*, remember that there is a message there for you.



思いやり

## Omoiyari

**(Take time to really care about others)**

I want to concentrate on the word *omoiyari*, which means thoughtfulness, sincere thoughtfulness. It means caring: caring for your family, your friends, your fellow workers, your neighbors, your country. Omoiyari is part of good discipline. So many people have the attitude, "Look, I don't have time to really care about myself, so how am I supposed to be able to care for everybody else?" This is a very bad attitude. What if everybody took this attitude! Can you imagine what life would be like?

The first place to start bringing thoughtfulness and care into your way of being is at home, with your family. This is most important.

It is not enough, however, to simply be thoughtful and caring if it is not sincerely motivated. Omoiyari means sincere caring. When we are sincere in showing care for others, we expect nothing in return. We are not fishing for compliments, nor searching for gratitude or reciprocity. Suppose that we do something kind for someone and that person ignores it completely, takes it completely for granted. "How dare he do that? At least he could have thanked me!" If we have this reaction, then we don't have omoiyari. If we do things for others with the expectation of gratitude, praise or awards, then we are not really doing it for others, we are doing it for ourselves, to build up our egos.

When you do *zazen*, you hear it said, "Expect nothing. Just sit." Don't expect your life to be transformed, and don't expect to reach anywhere or anything. The same idea underlies omoiyari. True giving and caring of others, sincere thoughtfulness—these things are their own rewards.



You should also try to develop omoiyari at the dojo. I want Seido students to train as a family. Some students simply come to the dojo and train in isolation, not caring to help or share their knowledge or experience with fellow students. They think, “I’m here to train. This is my time. I can’t be bothered about anyone else.” This is a very bad attitude. Train hard, sure. However, you will discover that taking an interest in others and showing omoiyari will enrich your own training and make it more meaningful.

向學心

**Ko Gaku Shin**

**(Keep your mind open, to learn)**

We must never stop learning and studying. There are so many specialists here at Seido, from many professional, technical and artistic fields. Even within your own special field, you know that you must constantly learn in order to stay up-to-date. As you continue to learn and become expert in a certain field, you will discover something interesting: The real expert, or master, in a given field learns more and more about subjects that are outside his or her own field. Your learning and studying should never stop, and it should know no boundaries.

There are different attitudes toward teaching and learning in Japan as compared with the United States. In Japan, for example, the karate master might take on very few students, if any. He would show a student a technique just once. It would then be the student’s responsibility to pay attention and remember the demonstration, to practice the technique over and over, to understand it, and to learn how to apply it. The master had given the student the opportunity to learn, but it was the student who must take the responsibility for learning. He or she, the student, would really be the teacher.

The modern attitude is quite different. The karate master in America might demonstrate a technique many times, and he might even help the student by holding an arm or a leg and guiding it through the movements. Here at the dojo students are shown a technique and some might say, “Okay, now I know that one. Show me the next one,” or they might go up to a *sempai* (senior student) and say, “How do I do this technique? Show me.” This is not a good attitude. This is not why we have sempais in the dojo.

Sempais are not here **just** to show or tell students how to do certain techniques. A sempai does not attain his or her rank just for knowledge of techniques, but rather for their experience, and for what they have learned from their experience. In this dojo, rankings reflect more than just a knowledge of karate.

There is no substitute for repetition, constant practice and self-discovery. Ten people might explain to you how to do *mae geri*. You might practice it a thousand times. Suddenly, one day you execute it properly and you instantly realize what you must do. You gain understanding and confidence from learning this way. Now the technique can become a part of you. You have made the discovery. No one “gave” you the answer. You found it. This is the way we should always seek to learn.

Our own inquiry, experience, and experimentation are the keys. This applies to our professions as well as to karate. Also, some people feel that when they learn a technique, then it somehow belongs to them. This is a selfish attitude. We are all here to learn from each other and to help each other. We are here in the dojo so that we can grow together.

一 米 一 汗

**Hito Kome Hito Ase**

**(One grain of rice, one drop of sweat)**

In Japan, in fact in most Asian countries, rice is a dietary staple. With a meal we may have vegetables, fish or meat, but rice is always served. Rice appears in many different forms, and some sweets, like rice cakes, are even made from this grain. Growing and harvesting rice is a long, laborious process, although today some of the sowing and harvesting is done by machine in Japan. The seeds must be meticulously planted in straight, well-spaced rows; when the paddy is flooded, the farmer undergoes a long period of uncertainty, when he is at the mercy of the elements, wondering if his seed was good. Come the harvest time, the workers must go out and toil all day bent over, cutting the stalks bunch by bunch. When the rice is on our table, all we see are nice, white, even-sized grains. We do not often stop to think of how many hands have worked to bring the rice to our table.

In America, compared with Japan, so much food is wasted. In Japan, we are taught to take only an amount of food that we can finish and therefore appreciate. Not to finish food is to be unappreciative of our fortune in having good and plentiful food in front of us. Here, people often take huge portions, wolf some of it down, and say “I want no more of this, I’d rather have something else.” During holiday time, abundant food on the table, elaborately prepared and beautifully presented, is a way of expressing the festiveness of the season. We should enjoy this, but we should also be appreciative of how interdependent we all are: how we depend on the hard work and goodwill of others. This, in turn, should make us do our work better, since somewhere, others will rely on the fruits of our labor.

不 言 實 行

**Fu Gen Jikko**

**(Let your actions speak for you)**

Sometime students come up to me and say, “Oh, Shihan, I’m going to be a really good student and



come five times a week. I'm going to train really hard. Just watch." Then circumstances, such as job pressures, illness or family conflicts, change, and the student is unable to train as he or she promised. If we are thinking about doing something, why do we need to announce it beforehand to others?

Suppose that a friend needs our help at a certain time. We say to our friend, "Don't worry, you can count on me. I'll be there." When our friend hears this, he is grateful and we receive his thanks. Then, as often happens, we simply forget our promise when the moment comes, or something comes up that prevents us from fulfilling our promise. The emotion of gratitude has been given and received, even when, by failing to help, we do not deserve the gratitude and good feeling. Our friend will be disappointed and there may even be bad feeling created between us because our words, our promise, created an expectation.

On a deeper level, how often do we say or hear the words, "I love you." It is very easy to say. The words are often said in an insincere way and end up causing disappointment and pain. Our actions are the truest expression of our feelings. If we really love someone, then by our actions they will know it in a way that is beyond words.

Let action be the embodiment of your feelings toward others.



七轉八起

**Nana Korobi Ya Oki**

**(If you fall down seven times, get up eight times)**

This is the most famous expression of Daruma Daishi, who was the first person to come from India and establish Zen in China.

We learn from this expression that no matter how many times you fall down, you must get up one more time. If you fall down one hundred times, you must get up one hundred and one. Sometimes you can get up quickly. Sometimes it is very hard to get up at all. Still, you must struggle and get up. When something unexpected arises in our daily lives, we often feel like giving up right away. We feel that life is over for us, and even if we were to try, we could not make it anyway. However, even when we feel like wanting to continue, if we gather all our spirit and energy, we find that we can, in fact, make it.

We are not perfect. We are only human. We all make mistakes. We have to try to become more



mature day by day. We should always try to make tomorrow better than today. However, we should not be so afraid of making a mistake that we become afraid to try. When people become like this, they become too cautious, and they worry too much. Their point of view becomes too narrow.

There are no guarantees in life. You cannot be assured that you will always be safe and comfortable. Sometimes you will fail. However, from failure you can learn a great many things. You learn how to get up again, and you grow from this experience.

Even though we cannot avoid mistakes, we can try to avoid making the same mistake twice. This is a very important point. We must not use our imperfection as an excuse to continue to make the same mistakes. It might happen that you may repeat the same mistake one more time, but that is when you must ask yourself: "Why have I done this again? What is my weakness?"

The most important thing is not to be afraid of failure. Don't give up. You can take your time, but you must always get back up. Sometimes you get up quickly, and sometimes you suffer. However, when it is time, you still have to get up. That is Daruma Daishi's real lesson.



**Seika Tanden**

**(Keep a strong center)**

*Seika tanden* is a point approximately four fingers directly below your navel. It corresponds roughly to the lower abdominal part of the body. The *tanden* is the physical center of gravity of the body. More importantly, though, it becomes the seat of the individual's psychic energy when the body's physical and spiritual powers are unified and focused there.

Many Oriental philosophical and spiritual systems, such as Zen, Tao and Yoga, recognize the connection between breath control, strengthening of the abdominal area and spiritual unification. This may sound abstract to you, but do you know where the power of a punch and the force of a kick come from? Not from strong arms and legs, although they are necessary for a strong technique. The power of karate techniques comes from seika tanden.

When you are in seated meditation, the position of your hands is meant to encompass and touch tanden. During our training we practice several types of breathing, all of which are meant to help strengthen tanden. You all know ibuki breathing. This is done by tensing the entire abdominal area, opening the mouth, relaxing the tongue and throat, while forcefully exhaling the air in the lungs; it ends with a quick forcing out of the last bit of air in the lower reaches of the lungs. Most students focus on the forceful and noisy exhalation; they make the noise from their throats. The power of the exhalation, however, comes from the tension in the abdominal area, from seika tanden. Similarly, in a *kiai*, the shout should come not from the throat but from the tanden. Ibuki breathing improves the circulation and tones the entire internal abdominal area.

Again, to get away from abstraction, let me relate a story to you. The other day I was on my way to the post office carrying a small package under my arm, when a strange man, whom I had not noticed, came up to me making loud shouts and threatening gestures. His intention was probably to startle and annoy me more than anything else. In situations like this, fear and panic are common reactions. When this happens to someone, his or her breathing may become rapid, shallow and

uncontrolled; it might even stop, and the person becomes literally paralyzed for a short time. Because of my training, however, my instant reaction was to tighten the tanden and to jump back into a stance where I could calmly assess the situation. Keeping my eye on the man, I slowly walked away and no harm was done.

This story is to make the point that the benefits of a strong tanden can be applied in daily life. The person who is in control of his breath is in control of himself, and can therefore deal effectively with any situation. Try this exercise. Suppose that someone does or says something that makes you angry; you can feel the anger welling up inside you. Take your hands and place them on tanden, and do three silent cycles of ibuki breathing. After the third one, you will notice that your breathing is more regular, that you are not as upset and that you can better evaluate and control the situation. Believe me, it works.

There is an American expression, “That man has got guts!” This means, obviously, that the man has strength and courage. There is a reason for the metaphor, however; strength and courage reside in, or come from, the “guts,” or center of the body, which is the seika tanden. There is a term used in yogic meditation, “to center one’s self.” This also refers to the focusing of one’s energies in tanden. The importance of a strong tanden is recognized, but not always remembered. You should constantly work on strengthening the tanden. You can do this by practicing ibuki breathing at home. It is an important part of your training.



燈臺下暗

**To Dai Moto Kurashi**

**(At the foot of a lighthouse it is dark)**

*Todai* means lighthouse; *moto* means under, or below; *kurashi* means dark.

Imagine that you are a lighthouse. Standing high above land and water, you would be able to look out in many different directions; you could see things that are very far away. But it would be difficult to see what is directly below you.

Perhaps it is easy to look at other people, i.e., it is easy to look away from yourself. It is easy to give suggestions, advice and criticism. But if you, yourself, are in the same situation, you don’t know what to do. Sometimes, when you keep looking outward, you lose touch with where you really are, what your position is, where you stand.

When you look out and see many different directions, it all seems so exciting and you are anxious to do everything. Sometimes, then, you forget what is beneath you—where your solid strengths,

beliefs and standards lie. When you reach out in too many different directions at once, you can lose your balance.

So it is wise to look inward, too, or underneath the surface, to get in touch with your real strengths—your foundation.

## 明鏡止水

Mei Kyo Shi Sui

**(A bright mirror calmly reflects the World, but is not changed by it)**

Think of the ocean, whose surface is turbulent, tossed by wind and wave. On the other hand, think of a lake, or a giant pond, whose face is still and calm. These images refer to the last two characters.

We should always keep ourselves bright, shiny and spotless, like a new mirror. This is not an easy thing to do; we may shine a mirror very carefully, and find that we have missed a spot; or, we find that, within a few hours, dust and dirt have undone our work. Under pressure of work and our families, we may neglect to keep ourselves bright and clean. Obviously, this is what we should always do in respect for our bodies and our physical appearance, but I am talking now in spiritual terms. The Japanese word *kokoro* means mind, soul, spirit, or inner being. We must keep our *kokoro* like a shiny mirror.



When we train in the Seido karate style, we are training our spirit. It is easy to deceive ourselves into thinking, “Oh, I’m terrifically hard and strong.” We may easily become physically strong, but as long as the spirit is weak, the person is weak, no matter how great the power of the body. In these talks, I often come back to the same themes, which may sound simple, but it is my experience that students must be constantly reminded of them.

Look at little things: how we stand in class, how we pay attention, how well we do little tasks like cleaning the dojo. If we maintain a joyous attitude, we will do little things well. If we do not keep our spirits bright, then we cloud and cover our spirits with our problems, our worries, and our fears. Then, when we come to the dojo, this will be written on our faces and reflected in many little things, such as how we stand. As we cloak and cloud our spirits in anger, fear and frustration, we can isolate ourselves from other people. I can see some of my students literally shrinking under the self-imposed weights they put on their spirits. People will shrink from us if we walk around with a tightly drawn, angry face. Soon, a person’s training will not be enjoyable, and the dojo will not be a special place for him or her.

On the other hand, if we keep our spirits like a shiny mirror, then, even if we have troubles and problems—as we all do—we can still smile and be calm and enjoy our training. If people learn that we had problems at one time and gave no hint of them and maintained a strong, calm spirit, they will admire us and even gravitate toward us.

Seido karate is for training the kokoro. We are not here just to learn techniques or to become physically strong. I know that all my students will achieve those two objectives by the process of coming to class over a period of time. As I look around the room today, everyone looks strong and healthy. We are here for one overriding objective: to train the spirit to be calm and strong.

*Shi sui*—still water. Even if the calm of a pond is disturbed by someone throwing a stone into the water, the stone sinks and disappears; the stone sends out waves that disturb the surface, but these are soon dissipated and there is no trace of the disturbance. A strong spirit handles adversity like this. We must strive to develop equanimity and steadiness.

I want my students to approach life's challenges in a certain way. When you are confronted with a problem, or a challenge, or an important decision, first of all, be calm like the still water. Ask yourself, "What *is* the problem here? What can I do about it?" Be realistic and do not give yourself impossible tasks. Do one small thing toward solving your problem. Proceed one step at a time. Be consistent, and always move forward, even if it's very slowly. Soon, the challenge will be over, and your spirit will have prevailed. This is the spirit of Seido, which I want all my students to achieve.



**Ichi Nichi Issho**

**(One day—one lifetime)**

*Ichi nichu* means "one day." *Issho* means "one lifetime." This expression *ichi nichu isscho* tells us how we should live our daily lives. Each day, day by day, your life unfolds and evolves. The sum total of your life's experience is built up day by day. To look at it another way, each day is a "miniature" of the whole canvas of life.

There is yet another way to look at *isscho*. Try to imagine that your whole life would have to be summed up by this one day. You would try to have the best day possible, and you would try to concentrate hard. "This is my life. This is a valuable day." Actually, today is January 21, 1982. There is only today. When the sun sets, the day is over, forever.

This imaginary exercise can give you valuable insight into your life.

Therefore, each day when you have done very well, and you have given five hundred percent of your effort, then you feel happy. "I've done everything from the time I got up in the morning until I finished at night." This will make you feel happy.

Everyone wants more happiness, more enjoyment, a better life. That's the way we are. However, in order for us to have this, we have to make a constant effort. Every day, make sure you give your best effort. Doing this each day is the only way you can improve and feel that you are growing.



It is the same way when you train. Do you come just because you decide to join here? No. Everyone has a different schedule. However, your determination is important. If you come once a week, take class once a week, concentrate, do good exercises, give one hundred percent of your effort; this is good. Some people have more time and can come twice a week, three times a week. We don't force you to come and say, "Each one of you must come to this number of classes." No, that's your prerogative to decide how much time you really spend on training. You should not carry your problems onto the dojo floor. As soon as you stand on this floor and put on your gi, you shouldn't think about any of your problems. As soon as you put on your gi and tie your belt, that's **your** time.

Kiai! It's okay. You will forget your problems. We need to do this. Each one of us is different, and we are subject to so many different pressures. You may never realize how much stress you're under, and you feel tense. Coming to the dojo makes it easier to deal with stress. If you are always carrying it inside, it is not good.

Even for a few minutes, sweat and kiai! Think of nothing. Make your mind empty. It is a simple way. But, you will feel good. After that, you have to take care of everything else. Don't forget the other things though!

I want you especially to keep remembering ichi nichi issho. It's a very simple expression, but it is very, very important.

節度持

**Setsu Do Motsu**

**(Be strong, and know when to bend)**

Bamboo is flexible. It can be bent back almost double upon itself. The shaft always springs back, however, and it does not break. This is because the stalk has *setsu*.

Iron, by contrast, is rigid and inflexible. Iron often symbolizes strength. Iron, however, can become brittle, and it can be broken.

In our lives and in our karate training, we must allow ourselves to have *setsu*. Although this applies to daily life, I shall discuss the idea using karate as an example. All my students want to



become physically strong and hard. This is a worthwhile purpose. So some students come every day, without fail; they take several classes in a day, and they do hundreds of push-ups at home and in the dojo. This is **not** necessarily a good thing.

You ask why? How long can a student carry on a regimen like this? Maybe for weeks; if the student is strong, maybe for months. Soon, however, you will reach your body's limits and like the iron, you will break and become ill or injured. Also, it means that your life is out of balance. Because a student who is spending so much time grimly training is probably neglecting other duties such as his job, his family, his studies, or his leisure time.

Always leave setsu, space, to enjoy what you are doing and to dwell on what you have accomplished. Leave time to ask yourself "What's missing?" in your training, or in your life. Think calmly about what needs to be done to improve. To do this, you must allow for setsu and be flexible.



## Gassho

**(Be grateful for each moment)**

*Gassho* means, literally, to bring the palms together. I want to talk about bringing your hands together in another context.

As I look around the room, I see that everyone looks happy and healthy. None of us, however, is completely happy and content. We all have the pressures of our jobs, our finances, our education, and our families. We all have ambitions, goals, and desires that we feel are only partly satisfied; therefore, we all feel frustrated and unhappy, to some degree. With a small change in attitude, we can remedy this situation.

Bring your arms around in a big arc and then join your palms—it is a very natural motion, isn't it? No matter what your size or physical condition, it seems to come easily to everyone. Bringing the palms together is almost universally recognized as symbolizing a prayerful, respectful attitude; in some cultures, bringing the hands together is a form of greeting, that conveys humility, respect and wishes for spiritual blessing on the other person. Try it often. You will find that a certain feeling comes with gassho. It is a feeling of gratitude, of appreciation and contentment.

We all have ambitions. We all strive after certain goals. This is fine. How often do we stop, look



at what we already have and what we have achieved? If we do this sincerely, we will realize how much we all have—our health, food, a home, loving friends and family. We can appreciate the richness of our lives **now**. Then we can perhaps enjoy our lives instead of being anxious about achieving a certain state or way of life in the future. We should enjoy the fullness of the present, not the promises of the future.

So consider gassho as another kind of exercise, which you can do in private and in solitude. But please do it. You will be surprised at how natural it is, and how good you will feel when you take the time to appreciate your lives and to be grateful for what you have.

# ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Karate master Tadashi Nakamura was born on February 22, 1942 on Karafuto, one of Japan's northern islands now claimed by the Soviet Union. Of upper middle-class parentage, he received degrees in architecture and psychology with the intention of entering business. His older brothers, black belt holders in Wado-ryu and Goju-ryu, introduced Nakamura to martial arts.

He began studying karate in 1953 under Master Masutatsu Oyama and became the youngest student in Japan to attain a shodan ranking in Kyokushinkai-kan. By the time Nakamura was 19 he had earned his nidan or second-degree black belt and was appointed chief instructor for martial arts training at Camp Zama, a U.S. military base near Tokyo, a significant honor for one so young.

One of Nakamura's first loves was tournament competition. He made his debut with a first-place triumph in the All-Japan Student Open Karate Championship in 1961. This was followed by a long string of victories which earned him a national reputation in the free fighting and kata categories.

In May of 1962, Nakamura was appointed as coach of the prestigious Toho Medical University karate team and took the championships for the All-Japan, Kanto and Eastern Japan karate tournaments.

During the same year the Thai Boxing Association, claiming their martial art, what we now know as kick boxing, was the superior fighting technique, officially challenged all the karate dojos in Japan. Out of the hundreds of karate schools, the Oyama dojo was the only one confident enough to accept the invitation. The tournament was international with each country represented by a three-man team. As part of the Japanese contingent, Nakamura recalls: "I saw this as a great personal challenge. I considered it the ultimate test of my mental and physical training in karate. Without this opportunity I would never know for certain just what I was capable of." In a full contact bout with only thin gloves for protection, Nakamura defeated the ranking title holder by a knockout and returned home victorious as the new Thai boxing champion.

Nakamura went on to earn his seventh dan under Oyama and, as the master's top student, was assigned as chief instructor at the Kyokushinkai Honbu in Tokyo. In 1966 he was named chairman of

the North American Kyokushinkai Organization and traveled all over the world holding demonstrations, seminars and clinics. Nakamura has made several appearances on ABC's Wide World of Sports, a nationwide TV program in the U.S., as well as at Madison Square Garden and the United Nations headquarters in New York.

As chairman of the World Seido Karate Organization, which he founded in 1976, Nakamura established the Seido Juku headquarters in New York City on October 15 of the same year. Seido karate, now a rapidly growing martial arts organization, has 44 schools and over 10,000 students around the world—all closely monitored by the founder. Nakamura is currently living in New York with his wife and three children.