



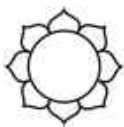
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リベラ 道場

リベラ 道場 RIVERA DŌJŌ



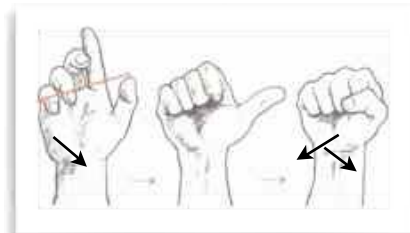
PART ONE:  
ABOUT THE SEIKEN  
(THE FIST)



Seiken (fist) is the essence of karate or karatedo 空手道 (empty handed way); i.e., the fist signifies pure or true power, not just in physicality, but spiritually. Therefore, the ones who possess the strongest punches (Tsuki) are always the ones who possess the strongest karateka 空手家 (who does karate) or Karatedō (follower of the empty-handed way). Other styles emphasize different aspects that are deemed their essence. but for all karate-dos, the fist or Seiken is the essence (or at least should be by the traditional advent of the style). This is also why tameshiwari (breaking) is done as demonstrations or before people fight in knockdown competitions to qualify. Whether one is breaking wood, concrete, marble, or ice, the act itself is to display power and its true energy, i.e., its force and the way one channels, exudes it. This is ostensible with karate masters who do Tameshiwara at their tournaments; they always have well-developed hands and fists. This is due to many years, if not decades (including several) of conditioning or specialized training to improve the overall hand strength.

Whether one first starts karate or boxing, the same mistakes are made. This is because one's hand is not strong or developed, so when one punches things, such as a pad, bag, or person, one tends to inflict pain onto oneself and then one becomes reluctant to punch, especially with power or conviction. Consequently, this can be an adverse reinforcement; i.e., one will not punch correctly, because of a fear (abstract thought - stagnant mind) of a past experience (dharma). This is understandable since the human psyche (mind or shin 心) is based on abstract thoughts (perceived reality), which are ruminated upon (secretions of the brain), like a bad movie, consuming (consciously and subconsciously focusing) one's energy (life/spirit; i.e., Jikō 自己 or the Self,) by displacing one's balanced state of being/perceiving (Genjōkōan 現成公案 or actualization of reality, Jijuyu 禪 or in the moment) with a (discriminative or separative)

So, one needs to fist (Seiken), via exercises, (discipline to one's craft). understand how to make a



Zanmai - self-fulfillment, zen delusional or analytical one.

develop one's hands, and thus, conditioning, and dedication. But first, one needs to proper fist and also what

mistakes that beginners make and will otherwise need to be corrected. Most think that the bigger the hand, the better the punch, which is not always true. One can have a big hand and still cannot deliver a strong punch, just as one can be much bigger than someone else and still lose in a physical altercation. However, there is some truth to the aforesaid statements, so realize that this was not dismissive in nature, rather, to underscore that one should not be presumptuous.

When making a fist, one has to start at the pinky or little finger; i.e., curl that finger inwards first, then the third finger, and so on, to the thumb. In this way, one has made a true fist and one's other three fingers are being squeezed together by one's thumb and pinky. These are the two most important aspects to one's fist (thumb and pinky finger). And for beginners, this is why one's wrist rolls over and one's hands "breaks" (opens up) when punching anything. Another reason for no impact is due to one having a tight/tense shoulder when executing a punch. This means one is using nothing but arm or shoulder strength and has absolutely no involvement of one's legs, hips or feet. Therefore, if one does not have possess a strong punch it is because one has a loose grip, and has not developed the necessary strength to provide "impact"; remember, one needs to squeeze one's hand as tight as possible, especially at the moment of impact, which takes time to develop.



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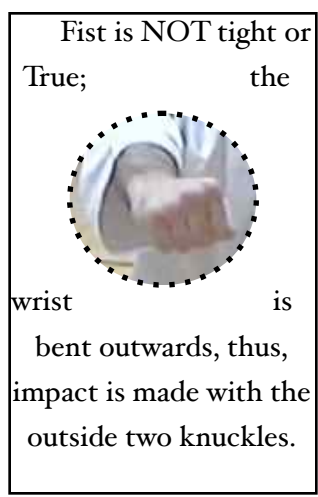


Moreover, one needs to make impact with the first two knuckles (Seiken) of the fist, which are the same two knuckles that one uses for push-ups, handstands, and Makiwara. This way one's first two knuckles will be in alignment with one's wrist, forearm, and shoulder/scapula. Henceforth, the power will come from within and be felt transcending into the first two knuckles on impact.

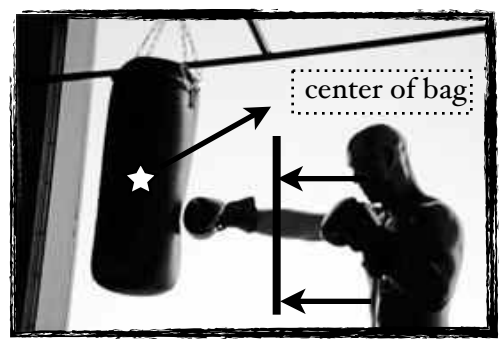


**PART TWO:  
ABOUT THE TSUKI  
(THE PUNCH)**

From a kinesiology perspective, when one executes a thrust punch (Tsuki 突き), one needs to learn to punch from the “Toes Up”; i.e., the power comes from ground up; so, one needs to have

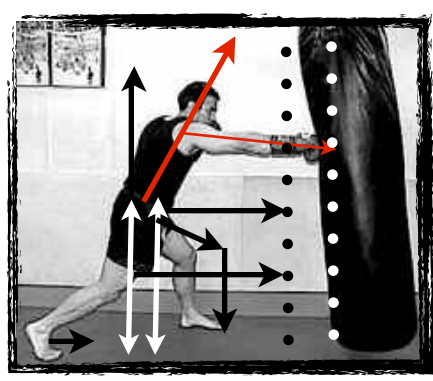


proper balance, which means having weight distributed correctly/efficiently on the balls of your feet (Chūsoku), soft knees, relaxed shoulders, which is good posture (Kamae 構え) and generate power from one's toes, upwards into the calves, and up into the thighs and hamstrings, then into the



Too far from bag; distance or spatiality is wrong/off, because his arm is overextended; it should be slightly bent (have a bend in it on impact).

buttocks, and then into the pelvis/hip region (core area), then through the Tanden 丹田 (core itself) diaphragm, abdominal cavity, ribs and entire back, up into the shoulders, and out



down through the arms into the forearms, wrists, and out to the one's Seiken (fist's or first two-knuckles) on impact. So, “Toes Up,” simply means punch from the ground up or from one's toes on up, using one's entire body letting the hips/pelvis lead your arm into the punch). And at the point of impact, one needs squeeze one's fist (Seiken) as tight as possible and thus, snapping one's shoulder into the impact and pull back the punch and not leave it hanging or resting on the target. That is a push-

punch and not a true punch.

assimilating



understanding

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mechanics  
(relating to

Notwithstanding, learning or (Kihon 基本) of punching, accomplish, is muscle dexterity or gross motor kinesiology (the study of of body movements) or an



how living beings move) and force (strength/energy, an attribute of physicality or movement). This is learned through one's practice as a Karateka (空手家) or practitioner in the martial

arts (especially in karatedo 空手道)

by actualizing one's reality (Genjōkōan).



**Mistakes:** Many mistakes are made; i.e., no “Toes Up” methodology; e.g., in uppercuts or Shita Tsuki one's hips or pelvis have to first lead one into the punch, meaning move before the arm shoots out for the punch, and more important goes upwards into the target. And for hook

punches or Furi-Uchis, one has to have rotation of hips/pelvis and thus, produce a torque of or in one's core (Tanden), so that power is generated from the ground up and then into the punch onto the target.

Not to mention, the same goes for Oi Tsuki 追い突き (leading punch) and Gyaku Tsuki 逆突き (reverse punch); i.e., again, one hips/pelvis leads one into the punch starting from the ground up and then one twists one's hips into the direction of one's target while exhaling out.



Another mistake is reaching for one's target & pitching or leaning to one side when punching. This is a big mistake, because first, one is off-balance and second, one is susceptible to devastating counter techniques (Awase-Waza 捨技). Also, one is not using one's hip/pelvis and is not using the "Toes-Up" method of punching.

Suffice it to say, it is clear that one needs to have/possess and demonstrate a true fighting stance (Kumite No Tachi 組手太刀 or 構え Kamae: posture). So, a wonderful way to find one is to walk around for a moment and pay attention to the gait (stride). From that, one can start to walk a bit slower until one sees/feels what one's true gate is. And once determined, stand with both feet parallel in a normal upright position (Heikō Dachi 八字立) and take one step forward and stop.

The aforementioned is basically one's fighting stance before one bends at the knees slightly (soft knees) and balances on one's ball of foot (Chūsoku) while keeping one's weight 50-50; of course one can widen it a bit or narrow it a bit, depending if one is executing a kick (narrower stance) or a punch (wider stance). Remember that when punching, stance is wider (more powerful base), and for kicking it is narrower (better balance/agility); but cognizant or keep in mind that committing fully to one technique, such as a stance, does leave oneself open momentarily as in virtually any technique (Waza 技).

That is why most beginners pitch or lean forward, because their stance is weak or not balanced; moreover, they also try to reach/lunge their target and therefore, are flat-footed (unbalanced), hence, their weight is off as well as having their back foot or knee facing away from their target, i.e., at 90 degrees instead of 45 degrees. Furthermore, their shoulders are too tense/tight/rigid and they do not know how to breathe correctly; i.e., take a breath before executing their punch and breathing out or exhaling as they punch.

Additionally, beginners have their elbows pointed upwards and out, and exposing their ribs, spleen, and liver. This is due to being tense and nervous too or not relaxed, which takes time to develop. Also, their knees are almost locked and thus, they are too upright and rigid or stiff, thus, lacking fluidity and calmness or balance. Not to mention, some people hop or bounce up and down continuously expending a lot of energy, instead of gaining a true meter (rhythm). And still others look down or stare at their opponents hands or feet, which can be a injurious mistake. And still others, tense up their trapezius muscles so much that their shoulders are almost touching their ear

lobes and they hunch over. Besides this being a demonstration of a tight, nervous person, it is truly uncomfortable as a Kamae or kumite no Tachi/Dachi; and ostensible, it is the antithesis of what one desires to do in kumite or free-fighting/sparring or fighting in competitions or out in the street.



**PART THREE:  
EXERCISE & STRETCHING**

By improving one's strength with push-ups, finger-tip wrist-rolls, hand-grips, handstands, and Makiwara training, one will develop a true fist (Seiken), but a key is to squeeze one's hands or always have a tight fist. The exercises recommended will improve one's overall strength and power. Building one's hand strength is necessary first, before one tries or starts to incorporate conditioning aspects, which demand a hand developed to a certain extent; i.e., several years of training. For instance, one needs to do handstands and push-ups.



Both will improve the alignment of one's fist, but offer different benefits to the practitioner. And of course the aforesaid exercises are done on the first two knuckles (Seiken), because done on the hands is of no benefit to one who wishes/desires to improve one's fist or punch. So, handstands improve

proper wrist, fist, and shoulder



alignment, plus, by squeezing one's fist as tightly as possible, one is supporting one's body-weight suspended in the air. This also improves flexibility and strength in



Elbows need to be beside you, not outwards.



one's shoulders (deltoid muscles). And it helps one posture, because a proper handstand requires excellent spine alignment, so one is in control of one's body and therefore, has balance.

However, this will not greatly improve punch; rather, this is a great and necessary do, akin to Buddhists with Zazen and strength in the shoulder and forearm area.



ones fist or make one possess impact on a first step; one that ALL karateka people Nembutsu. Handstands improve one's arm

But again the key to it as well as with push-ups, is keeping the fist as TIGHT as possible at ALL times, which is difficult and takes time to develop (via one's practice).



As for push-ups (to the left), they are doing knuckle push-ups incorrectly; i.e., they are on their fingers or the part of the finger between the first two digits. So, all their body-weight is not on the first two knuckles, which it needs to be, to be a true knuckle push-up. Plus, their hand placement should be parallel with their nipples and not their shoulders



or head. Additionally, one's elbows should not jut or go outwards, rather, they should be next to one's body by the ribcage. Go down to the floor slowly, and explode up, but do not lock out your elbows at the top of the movement.

Again, your hands must be squeezed tight, because this is what strengthens your hands for a better fist. You will form thick (and needed) calluses onto your knuckles (Seiken), but push-ups

are for your hand strength development and not knuckle development, which is an after-effect.



Wrist rolls or more aptly put, fingertip-wrist rolls are excellent to do, if done correctly, however, the regular ones as depicted here are good, but inferior; as already mentioned above, regular wrist rolls, radial and ulnar flexion will only strengthen the ligaments and tendons around the muscle and not enlarge or grow the muscle (for power). But, that is important, because then the muscles will be supported more when doing other mass building exercises or training.

Both ulnar and radial flexion are great for the same thing as well as rehabilitative too, but you can see and will feel how superior finger-tip wrist rolls are comparatively. Of course, hold or squeeze for a second at the top of the movement (as in any exercise). And focus your mind into it (the movement). Additionally, Shadow Boxing is very good for practicing your stance, balance, timing (meter), and breathing. It is excellent to do in front of a mirror, and then once you become more advanced, you can do it without one. The key or imperative to or of it is that you must remember to squeeze your hands or make/have a tight fist; in this way, you will develop some hand strength, because it is hard to keep a tight fist all the time; i.e., your hand will begin to cramp until it gets used to being tight/squeezed. However, you have to build up to it; start with a tight fist for 15 to 20 seconds and build up from there. Exhale out on each punch; do not dip your head or tilt or pitch forward. Keep a good balanced stance. Snap your shoulders when you punch, but keep relaxed (very hard to do), and watch yourself in the mirror; e.g., how you move, if you are off-balance, leaning, tight, flat-footed, etc.. An advanced way of doing this is to incorporate handgrips (Handcrushers/IMTUGs); i.e., using a pair to squeeze the entire time or round duration. At first, you can only keep

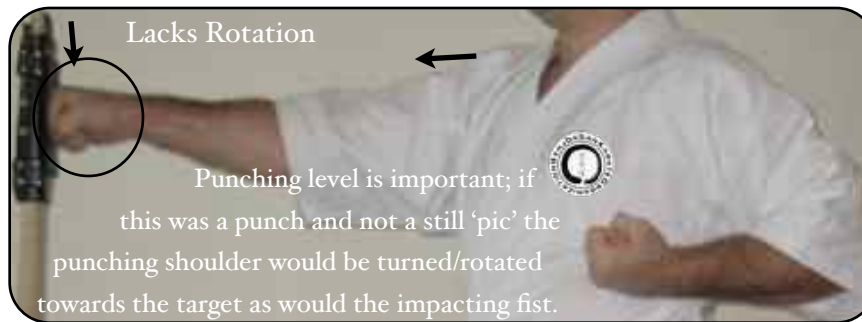




them closed for seconds at a time, but in time, you can hold them closed for a minute, and then, for the entire round, which should be 3 minutes,



but start with one minute rounds.



PART  
FOUR:

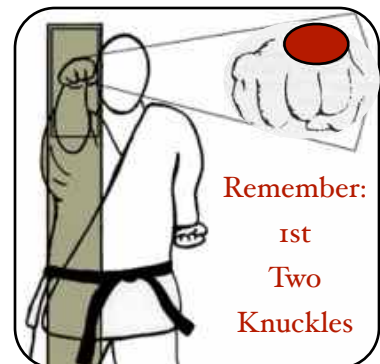
MAKIWARA  
TRAINING  
(CONDITIONING  
THE HAND)

To improve one's strength and thus, power (impact) in

one's hand/fist, one needs to apply the two training methods; one, the Makiwara, and two, the usage of handgrips, both of which vastly improve one's overall hand strength, which translates into raw power or impact. For the Makiwara, one can made them out of several things. Meaning, it can be made with sand (and different grains), rope or twine, small rocks or pebbles, wood planks, bricks or concrete slabs. Ropes or twine are wrapped around a tree or wood pole stuck into the ground. In regards to sand, rocks, or pebbles, they are put into a sandbag (taut canvas bag) and hung from something. And bricks or concrete usually has a thin layer of cloth wrapped around it placed over the impact area, so that one's hands (skin) does not get "shredded" from friction caused. Traditionally, Makiwara where like these photographs. "One thousand times is practice, ten thousands times is refinement," Miyamoto Mushashi.



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t h e



One can make one by taking using one heavyweight garbage bag (to put sand into), two thin, but sturdy laundry bags (to put garbage with sand into), and then one canvas duffle bag (to put the double bagged laundry bag with sand into).



Start with 20 pounds and then add more as your hand develops or as it becomes easier to punch it. Is it best to hang it from something, so that it sways and gives when punching it. However, one can also put it onto one's lap (legs/thighs) for support, while punching it (this is not optimal, but an adequate alternative).



Also, start with 2 sets and 20 to 25 repetitions (punches). Then after a while, increase the repetitions, and then the sets. One can rest in between sets (meaning after both hands have punched); but, eventually,



this is not necessary, as one will keep alternating hands until finishing the desired amount of sets. And one initially punches using Tatakren or horizontal and not vertical punching. This warms up the entire hand and is more natural to being with. Even experienced practitioners will still start their first one or two sets of each hand with Chūdan Gyaku Tatakren Tsuki (middle reverse inverted punch).



One can also develop Shita Tsuki (upper-cut punch) and Furi Uchi Tsuki (hook punch), Shutō (knife-edge), or Sho (palm), etc., but again, that is in time, so do not be in a hurry or obsess over fast progress. Remember, that is not karatedo or zen. It is being driven by one's ego or abstract mind, which we have to let go of.

The hardest part of Makiwari punching, besides the initial pain, especially if your hands and



knuckles are not developed is knowing how to punch it. What

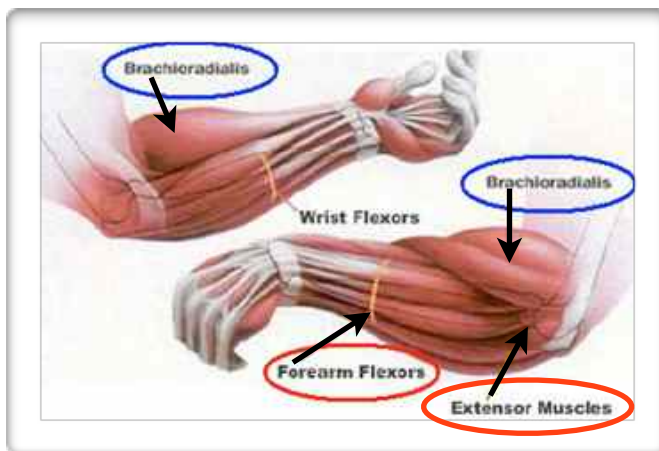


that means is that one needs to learn the

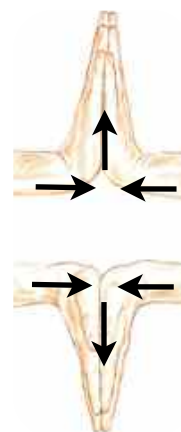
mechanics, per se of how to hit it, rather than, hitting it as full

power, and severely hurting oneself.

When punching it, one needs to have a good stance, relaxed and normal fighting stance and start from the waist and hips with chambered hand by one's side (chest/nipple



level) and slide forward (Okuriashi) with the leading foot and rotate hips/pelvis forward and let one's hand follow that path towards one's target. Once one is facing the target or square to it, by then the fist is on the way to the target (sandbag). As one's fist is about to impact the bag, one tightens it completely (as tight as possible) and rotates one's hand, like a bullet down a barrel, and continues twisting it into the sand bag upon impact of the punch



or fist. One cannot be too far away from the bag or one will injure oneself by hyperextending one's arm/elbow. And if one's fist is not tight,

KARATEDO



one's hand will thus, be injured. It will collapse or roll under the concussion or force of one's punch. Therefore one has to have the correct angle and be square to the bag, and use one's hips or "Toes Up" method/tenet. Shoulders have to be relaxed as well. That is why the Makiwara is excellent training or the best in many ways. It develops one's punch to a level one cannot do without partaking in by reiteration.

Moreover, it is about one's technique, which is learned or instilled through repetition (one's practice). It is truly about using one's weight and the transferring of it; one learns to 'drop' one's weight into the technique (Waza). However, many times at other schools and disciplines, one is punching away with reckless abandon, and either "punching" or what can be deemed as "cleaning the bag" by lightly touching it, since it is too hard and their hand is not conditioned or their are blasting it, because the "sandbag" is too light. In either way, this is of absolutely no benefit; one is pretending and thus, acting as scenery for others to see.

Not to mention, most do it in privacy, as to concentrate, but if done within a dōjō, once can concentrate to, if surrounded by other true practitioner, such as Uchideshis. Sometimes the outside noise is good for one to practice focusing more on that experience (dharma) within that moment itself (genjōkōan).

Another great way to immensely improve one's hand strength and thus, one's punch or fist is handgrips. You can follow the directions of the company on how to use them. One caveat is that one MUST stretch your wrists and hands, or you will suffer tendonitis in your elbow, and suffer potential nerve damage or pinching of it at least. Plus, one cannot go over-board, meaning do too much; albeit, one's strength increases after a while, one cannot use them too much or one will suffer reprisals of the body; i.e., one's tendons, muscles, ligaments, and nerves.

The usage of these grips are imperative, and one's improvements are vast, but one has to keep up using them or one loses one's strength. Of course taking rest or some time off is crucial. Plus, there are so many variations to using these grippers, that one should never feel bored or without some level to attain.

In time, one will notice the tightness in one's hands; i.e, one's grip is stronger, because of the development of one's muscles within the hands; e.g., the lumbricals and interossei muscles (top parts of hands), the flexor and abductor digiti minimi brevis muscles (underside of hand), as well as the opponens digiti minimi, the opponens pollicis, flexor pollicis brevis, abductor pollicis brevis, and the abductor pollicis muscles, as shown and diagramed below.

Remember, **stretching** is just as important as the usage of the above mentioned product(s) or tool(s). If one refrains or dismisses stretching, one will injure one's extensors muscles (see diagram), which is in the elbow region and one's brachioradialis muscles, which is the opposing muscle group located in the upper forearm region.

To the left is ulnar and radial stretching; one either pulls the wrist towards oneself in an upwards motion (ulnar) or downwards or away from one (radial). Hold for 30 seconds and then do other hand and repeat as many times as possible: do throughout the day. And to the right is another stretch; put one's hands together at the palms (sho) and press together and them upwards and then downwards.

All of the above are ways that practitioners of karate (empty-handed way) utilize or partake in. This kind of training is serious and takes many years, and actually decades, to reach a significant point as described above; but as a karateka, it is perseverance and dedications to one's craft, discipline, or Way. This is one's Dharma (experience), but one (Jikō) has to actualize it (Genjōkōan) and be Zen (Interconnectedness/Universality)

And remember the Five Elements of punching (a true Tsuki): One's Balance, One's Fist (Seiken), One's Breath, One's Timing (Meter), and One's Relaxed Body (Shoulders); i.e., to punch, punch "Toes Up."

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