

hardened by repeatedly striking a thick post, wrapped in rope, called a makiwara. The fingertips are toughened by pounding them into a box of sand, later replaced by fine pebbles. This toughening takes longest to develop and must be done gradually. Gloves (usually rubber) should be worn during such exercises; otherwise, the fingernails will fall off.

The important principle in breaking is this - power should always be focused into a small, hard point, never distributed over a wide area. For punch breaking, the concentration should be on the two large knuckles, 60% on the first knuckle and 40% on the second knuckle. For open hand breaking, the hand should be curved upward, toward the forearm, so that only the small bone at the outside base of the hand, next to the wrist, is exposed for impact. In the case of a "missed" (unsuccessful) break, striking with a wide area can cause injury, whereas striking with a small, hard surface will not.

Breaking techniques stem directly from the proper execution of karate movement. Breaking power comes from repetition of karate strikes. All principles for correct blows with the hand, elbow, etc. apply to breaking with the same blows. The "secret" of successful breaking is simply this - hit very, very hard. To do this requires power, and power, to repeat, is acquired by long continual repetition of karate striking exercises. Some particularly helpful exercises are backfists, punching, power punching, open hand blocks and elbow training.

The execution of the break can be done in a number of ways, depending upon the position of the breaking object. It is commonly resting on supports and thus is to be hit downward or held by two or more individuals and thus is to be hit horizontally. For breaking downward, the extreme edges of the breaking object should be resting on a firm support, as low as possible. For breaking horizontally, the individuals holding the object should grasp it firmly, as near to the edges as possible, and lock their arms and bodies rigidly. It is best if their backs or shoulders are supported against a wall.

Breaking style varies with the different blows, just as striking techniques differ. The break itself does not. The aim of the strike should be inside the breaking object. The force of the strike must carry through the object. Preparation comes from slowly repeating the strike a few times up to the point of contact with the object, acquiring momentum on the breaking strike and inhaling deeply before striking. On the break, the object is struck with absolute force in the proper execution of the selected technique. At the moment of impact, the breath is exhaled fully and sharply, often with a scream or shout, and the muscles of the entire body, especially the back and abdomen, are locked into the blow.

Section Two

BASIC TECHNIQUES



## Breathing

Shorin-Ryu Matsubayashi is a relaxed, natural style of karate. Proper breathing during all karate practice and execution is absolutely necessary to supply the body's need for oxygen, especially at times of excitement or exertion. Develop a breathing pattern which remains constant and even, but which allows the breath to be expelled strongly during an attack. Do not, however, become involved in the hissing, screaming, gasping or straining which is sometimes mistakenly thought to be part of good karate technique. When breaking, or performing certain movements in advanced kata, it may be appropriate to make some sound in connection with the expelling of breath, but this need not concern the beginning student.

Begin a breathing sequence by exhaling completely from as low in the abdomen as possible, directing the breath out the mouth. When the breath is completely expelled, inhale deeply, again low in the abdomen, bringing the air in through the nose. Practice this until it becomes a natural breathing pattern. Remember to exhale fully and to breathe correctly even when exhausted. Fatigue is not an acceptable excuse for the deterioration of technique; nothing is. A body needs fresh oxygen as much as it needs blood. Improper breathing may be as damaging as an open wound.

## Calisthenics

Exercises at the beginning of each class accustom the body to rapid movement and prepare it for the strenuous practice of karate. They also stretch and loosen the body and develop muscular strength. While the type and number of exercises may vary according to the preference of each instructor, they should begin with stretching and loosening movements, then increase in speed, repetitions and resistance. Particular exercises are selected for specific purposes, and each student should perform them diligently.

The calisthenics which follow are appropriate for a typical class.

- Neck rotations
- Hip rotations
- Leg stretching to the front
- Leg stretching to the side
- Knuckle pushups
- Finger-tip pushups
- Sit-ups
- Leg lifts
- Alternate toe-touching
- Running in place

As students' physical condition improves, the number of repetitions of each exercise should increase accordingly. Calisthenics are usually followed immediately by punching and kicking practice. If extra physical training is required, instructors may add additional calisthenics at the end of each class period.

## Stances

Stances combine with breathing to form the basis of all good technique. The spine is always straight, with the ears, shoulders and hips in a straight line as viewed from the side. The upper body is relaxed, allowing the legs to bear the weight. Because the legs both support the body and deliver kicks, it is important to practice all stances until they can be performed absolutely correctly.

Avoid the common error in all stances of leaning forward. Never bend the neck or look downward. It destroys balance and renders all parts of the body which are bent more susceptible to attack. Instead, remain upright, in good posture, with the weight of the upper body centered over the hips.

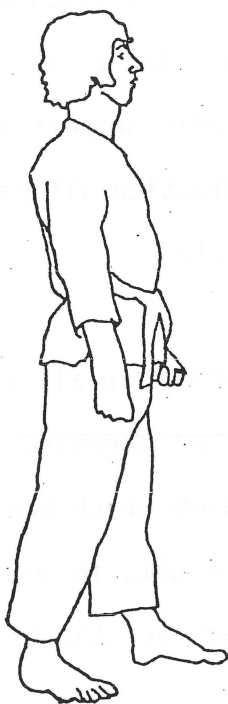


Figure 1

Walking stance. Although not a formal Shorin-Ryu fighting position, the walking stance (Figure 1) is frequently used in training. Step forward, just as though walking down the street. The length of each stride should be such that the heel of the leading foot is even with, or just ahead of, the toes of the trailing foot. The knees are straight, and, as in all stances, the upper body is relaxed and loose.



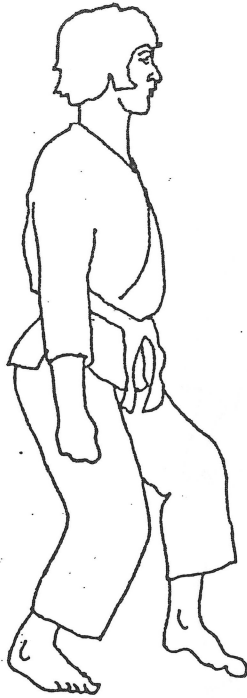


Figure 2

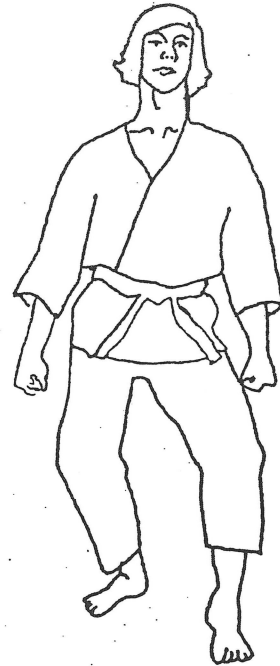


Figure 3

Cat stance. This is a flexible, mobile stance which leaves the leading leg free for movement, kicking or blocking. The rear foot is turned forty-five degrees outward and bears all of the weight of the body (Figure 2). The rear leg is bent so that the thigh is approximately forty-five degrees from the horizontal and the weight of the body is centered over the rear foot. The front knee and foot are pointed directly into the opponent (Figure 3). The ball of the front foot has contact with the floor, but bears no weight. The feet are at least one foot apart at their nearest points, and the body, like the rear foot, is turned forty-five degrees outward.

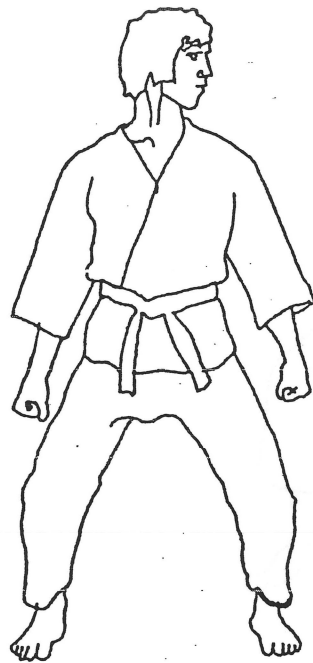


Figure 4

Side stance. Combining excellent qualities of strength and mobility, this is probably the most versatile stance in the art. The heels are slightly wider than shoulder width apart, with the feet turned slightly outward (Figure 4). The knees are bent, and the spine is straight. The side of the body is turned toward the opponent. Avoid leaning forward, and maintain even weight distribution.

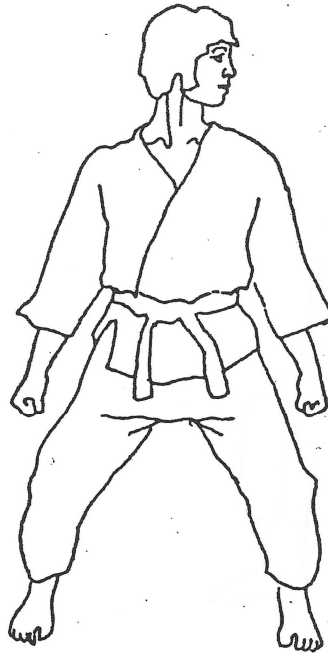


Figure 5

Horse stance. This is stronger and wider than the side stance, but lacks some mobility. The feet are approximately one and one-half times shoulder width apart, with the toes and heels parallel (Figure 5). Tension on the legs is outward. The upper body is straight, relaxed and upright. As in the side stance, the weight is evenly balanced on both feet and the side of the body is turned toward the opponent.

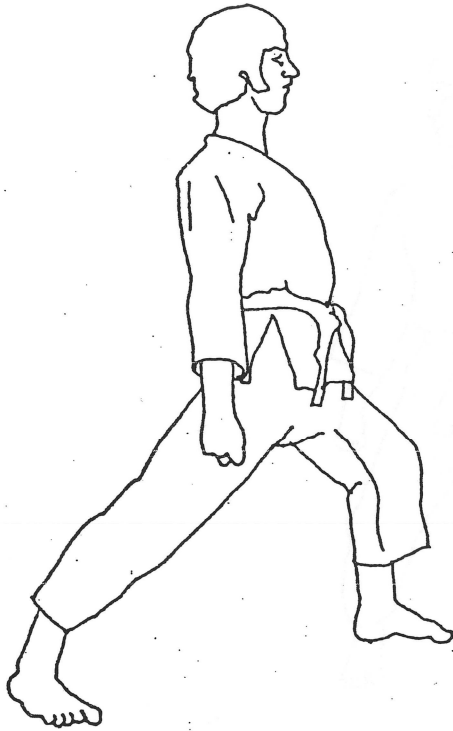


Figure 6

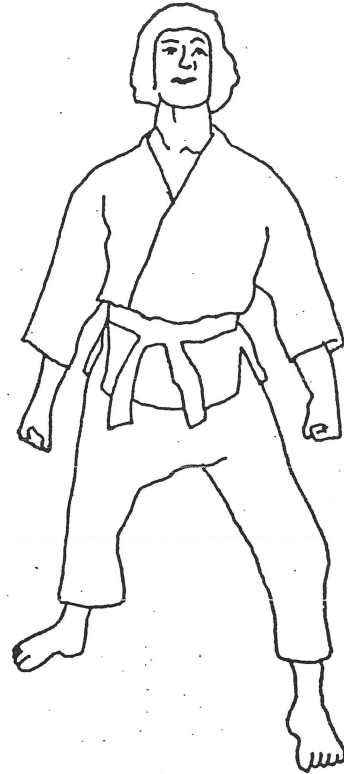


Figure 7

Front stance. This is a strong, low stance, oriented toward the front. It provides a particularly strong base from which to attack forward. The front knee is bent so that the shin is vertical, and the rear leg is locked straight with the rear foot pointed forty-five degrees outward (Figure 6). The front knee and foot are pointed directly into the opponent (Figure 7). The width of the stance should be about the same as the shoulders, and the length, generally, should be twice the width. Sixty percent of the body's weight is on the front foot, with the remaining forty percent on the rear foot.

## Blows

In all blows delivered with the hands or elbows, certain common practices must be followed. The supporting stance is the basis on which the technique is formed and the position from which it is delivered. It should be strong and correct, so that the entire power of the body can be focussed in the blow.

The striking surface, whether it is the hand or the elbow, should be properly formed and tight, but the remainder of the upper body should be relaxed and fluid during the blow. Do not deliver blows with the body stiff. Instead, tighten the back, shoulder and upper arm on the striking side just before impact.

Avoid the common mistake of leaning into the technique by bending the body or shifting the shoulder on the striking side forward. It is important, however, to deliver each blow completely, with full extension of the arm.

If one arm is extended at the time a blow is delivered, it should be recovered to the correct ready position with speed and power equal to that of the blow itself.



Figure 8



Figure 9

Punch. The straight punch is the most important and practical blow in karate. Begin by clenching the fist tightly with the wrist straight. Remember, in all basic Shorin-Ryu karate, whenever the fist is clenched, the wrist is straight. Draw the fist back, behind the chest, high in the armpit, with the palm up (Figure 8 and 9). Learn to draw the fist back as far as possible and to turn the palm so that the back of the hand is horizontal, rather than at an angle. Do not tighten or raise the punching shoulder. Keep both shoulders relaxed, the spine straight and the chin up. Study this ready position carefully. It is an important component in the preparation of many karate moves.

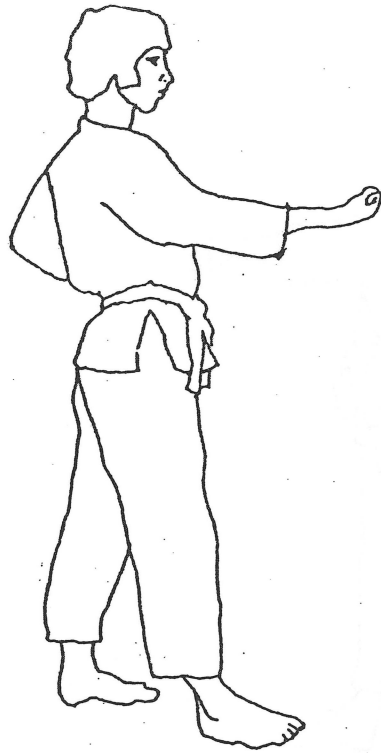


Figure 10



Figure 11

Punch, continued. The blow is delivered straight ahead, moving rapidly forward with the palm up (Figure 10). Just before impact, turn the wrist so that the palm is down and the two large knuckles strike exactly in front of the breastbone. In punching, keep both shoulders the same distance from the target. Do not lean or stretch into the technique. The punch should actually travel the shortest possible distance that a fully-extended arm will allow. Remember to punch in front of the breastbone, not in front of the shoulder on the punching side. Notice that the wrist is straight at the time of delivery (Figure 11) just as it is during preparation.

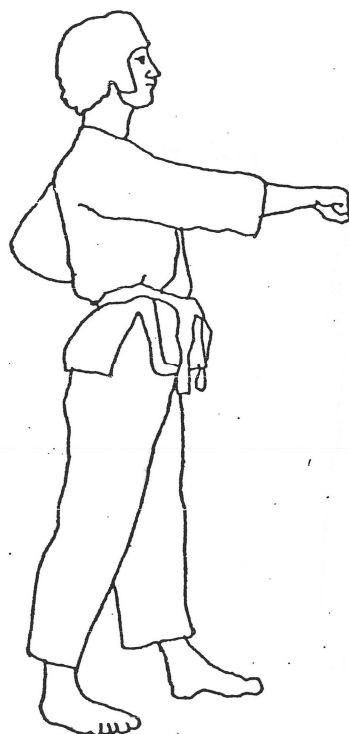


Figure 12

Reverse punch. This blow is similar to the straight punch, except that it is delivered from the side of the body which has the leg to the rear. This allows focussed impact much closer to the body than does the straight punch. Deliver a reverse punch straight ahead. Do not hook or curve it (Figure 12).



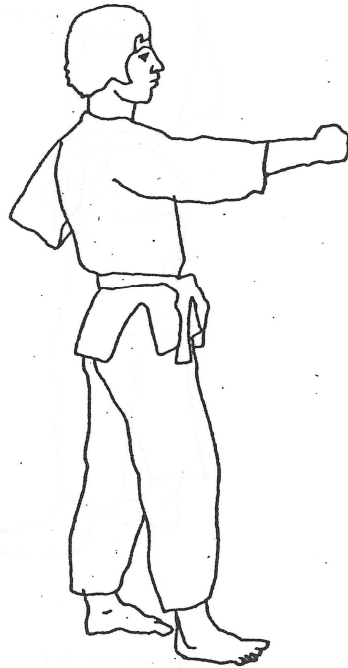


Figure 13

Vertical punch. This, too, has much in common with the straight punch. Preparation and much of delivery are exactly the same. However, just before impact, the fist is turned halfway, into a vertical position, rather than all the way around into a horizontal mode. Location of the blow is similar to that of a straight punch (Figure 13). Impact is with the two large knuckles.

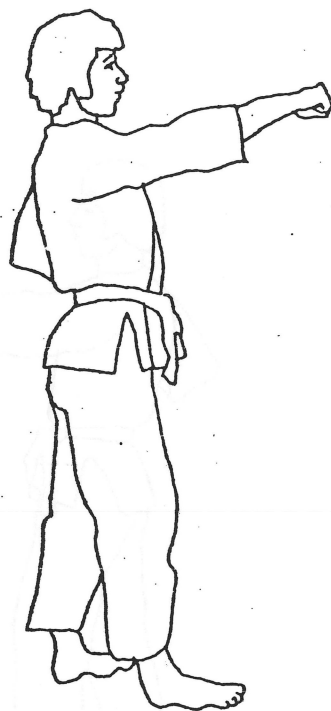


Figure 14

High punch. The high punch may be delivered as a reverse punch or a straight punch, that is, from the side of the rear leg or from the side of the leading leg. In practice, impact is at the height of the nose. Since the face and head are rounded, hard surfaces, it is vitally important that the fist be formed properly and that the wrist remain straight (Figure 14).

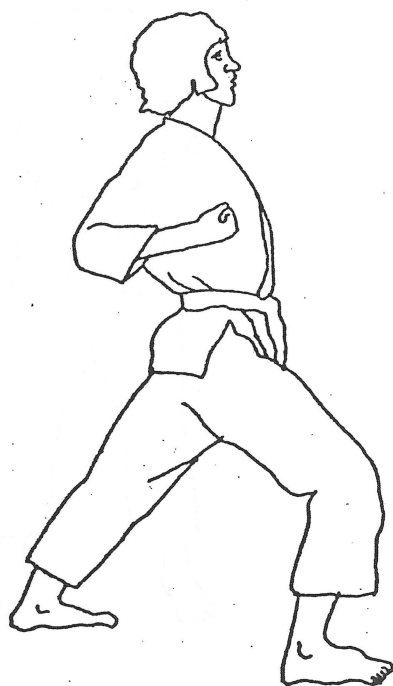


Figure 15

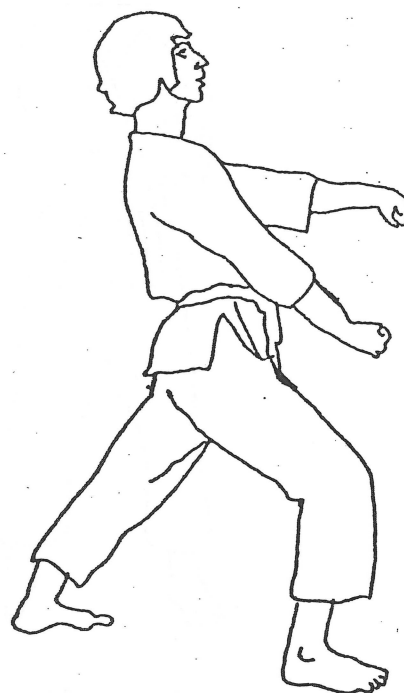


Figure 16

Double punch. These simultaneous blows are normally thrown from either the front stance or the cat stance. Preparation on both sides is exactly the same as for a straight punch. Both fists are drawn back behind the chest with the wrists straight (Figure 15). The lower blow, aimed at the groin, is delivered from the side of the leading leg. It does not turn, but drives straight in with the palm up. The upper blow is delivered as a straight punch (Figure 16). In this, as in all blows, it is necessary to remain upright and avoid leaning into the technique.



Figure 17

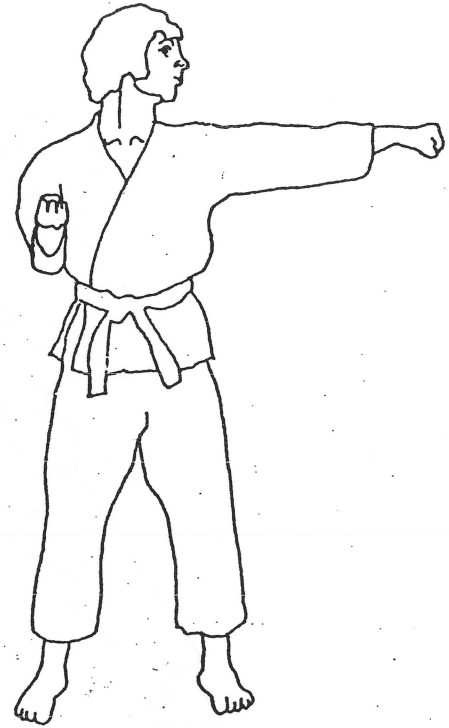


Figure 18

Chase punch. This blow travels in a flat, horizontal arc and strikes the opponent with the two large knuckles. Preparation may be as for a straight punch, but is also correct to prepare by clenching the fist at or near the opposite shoulder (Figure 17). In this case, the other hand is also back in the ready to punch position. Snap the blow outward with the fist clenched and the wrist straight. Just before impact, turn the wrist over so that the palm is down and the wrist is straight. Control of distance is especially important in this technique. Avoid ducking the head or shaking the body at the beginning of the punch. Note that the shoulder, elbow and fist are in an even line (Figure 18).