

Figure 19



Figure 20

Backfist. Because it operates in a shallow curve, the backfist may not have the direct, straight line power of a punch. It is, however, quite fast and will work well against a variety of targets, especially on the upper body and head. The fist is clenched, as for a punch, and the wrist remains straight throughout the blow. Preparation may be as for a straight punch, or, as shown here (Figure 19) at or near the opposite shoulder. Snap the fist out, into the target so that impact is with the top of the two large knuckles. As with a chase punch, avoid ducking the head or shaking the body at the beginning of the technique. A common error is to snap or flex the wrist at impact. Keep the wrist straight and snap the entire arm fully into the target (Figure 20).

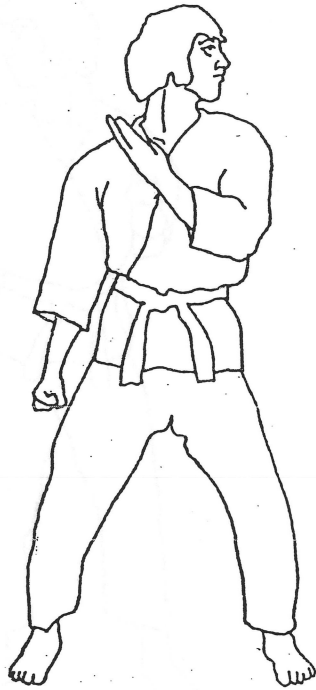


Figure 21



Figure 22

Chop. This blow has suffered from far too much popularization. Like all techniques which operate in a curve, it has definite, but limited usefulness. Prepare by cocking the thumb across the palm and bending the wrist back so that the outside corner of the heel of the hand is exposed. Impact is with the small bone at the outside base of the wrist. Do not strike with the edge of the hand between the base of the little finger and the wrist. To do so is to invite a fracture of the long bone at the edge of the hand. For a correct chop, the little finger should be stretched forward and the palm of the hand turned slightly toward the target at impact. For a chop to the side, prepare with the hand formed properly, as described, at or near the opposite shoulder (Figure 21). Then snap the arm out to the side, at shoulder height, just as in a chase punch (Figure 22). Just before impact, turn the hand so that the bone at the base of the heel of the hand strikes the target.

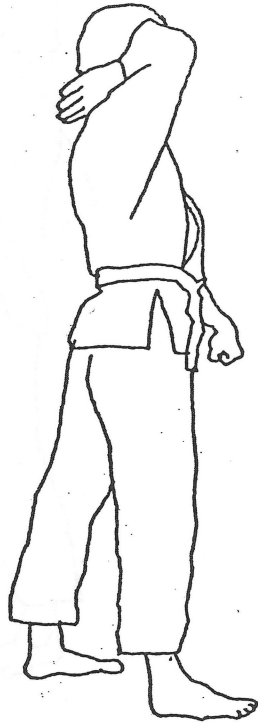


Figure 23

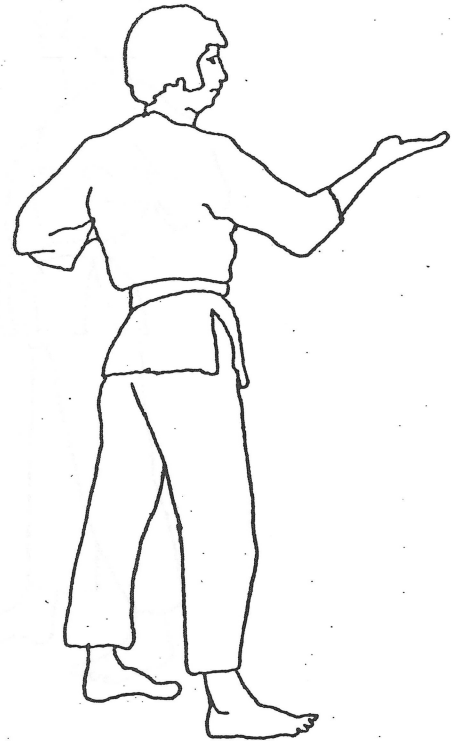


Figure 24

Chop, continued. The second method of delivery is to the front. While it has less range than the side chop, it is useful in close quarters. Prepare by forming the hand correctly behind the neck on the attacking side (Figure 23). Deliver the blow in an arc to the front, extending fully into the opponent (Figure 24). Just before impact, turn the palm upward and expose the bone at the heel of the hand so that it strikes the opponent. The same preparation may be used in combination with a downward striking arc to finish a disabled opponent.



Figure 25



Figure 26

Spear hand. Also called a "finger punch". the spear hand provides perhaps the smallest striking surface in basic Shorin-Ryu karate. A great deal of practice, striking into a container of dry, fine pebbles, is necessary in order to develop competence with this blow. Prepare by cocking the thumb across the palm and drawing the longest finger of the hand back so that it is roughly even with the first and third fingers. Cock the hand back behind the chest, similar to the preparation for a punch (Figure 25). The palm is upward, with the edge of the hand next to the body. Deliver the blow as a punch, directly to the front (Figure 26). Just before impact, turn the wrist halfway, so that the hand is vertical, with the edge downward, as it strikes the opponent.

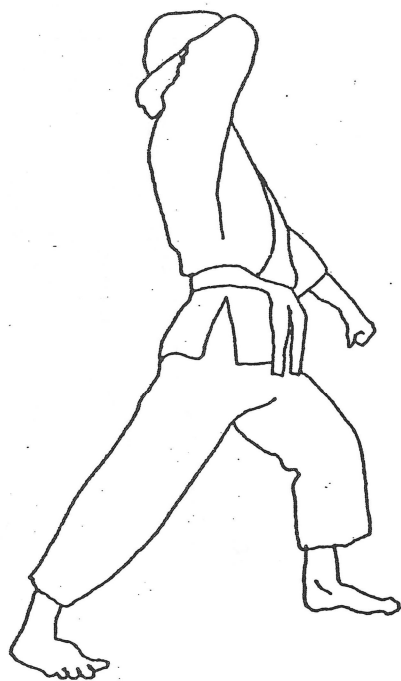


Figure 27

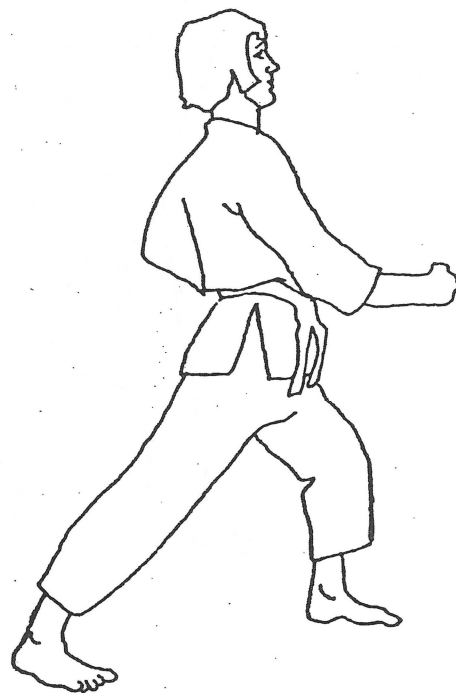


Figure 28

Hammerfist. Delivered downward, in a strong arc, this blow may be used for a variety of purposes, including breaking and finishing a disabled opponent. Prepare by cocking the fist behind the neck on the attacking side (Figure 27). Be sure that the entire fist is clenched very tightly. Deliver the blow downward, striking with the base of the hand, near the wrist (Figure 28). Keep the upper body upright. Avoid leaning into the technique or bending over the target.

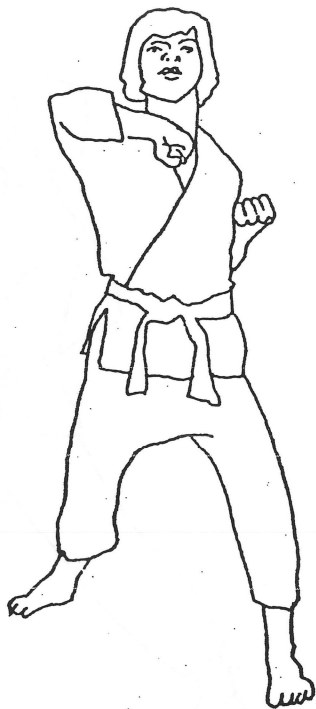


Figure 29

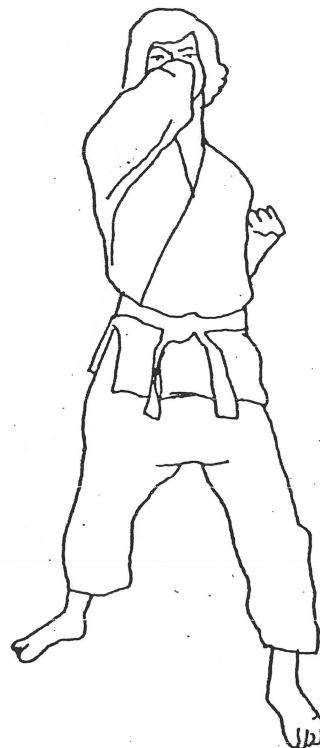


Figure 30

Elbow. Extensive drill and practice with the elbow is a unique feature of Shorin-Ryu karate. This is a fast, powerful blow, to which beginning students should devote much attention. Prepare as for a straight punch, with the fist cocked behind the chest. It is important to remember that preparation for the elbow strike is exactly the same as preparation for a straight punch. The blow may be delivered horizontally, snapping the elbow around to the front in a flat arc. The forearm should end up in front of the body (Figure 29). The fist is in front of the chest, and the fist, elbow and shoulder are the same height from the ground. The blow may also be delivered upward, striking up the long axis of the opponent's body (Figure 30). In this case, the fist snaps up under the ear on the striking side as the elbow moves upward in an arc. Impact with the elbow is always with approximately three inches of bone, below the tip of the elbow, on the outside edge. Considerable toughening against a makiwara is useful to harden and thicken the skin over the striking area.

Kicks

In all kicks, it is important to maintain proper breathing and to deliver the technique with the spine straight and the upper body relaxed. Breathing and stance, therefore, form the basis of these techniques as they do of all others. Beginning students must work to stretch the legs in order to have flexibility and freedom of movement in the hips. Generally, all kicks should be practiced as high as possible, in order to achieve maximum stretch.

Balance is a particular problem with kicks, because the student must practice maintaining the body upright on one leg while kicking with the other. Do not lean away from the opponent in order to increase the height of impact. Instead, develop flexibility in the hips and through the groin so that a kick may be delivered high while the body remains upright in good balance.

Since kicks must sometimes travel a great distance to reach their targets, speed is vital. Like all karate techniques, kicks should burst into the opponent with great speed and force, not push him or move him intact. Recover kicks in a sharp, fast manner to avoid the chance that the opponent might grasp the kicking foot.

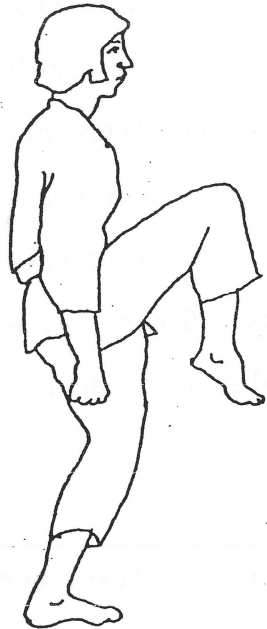


Figure 31

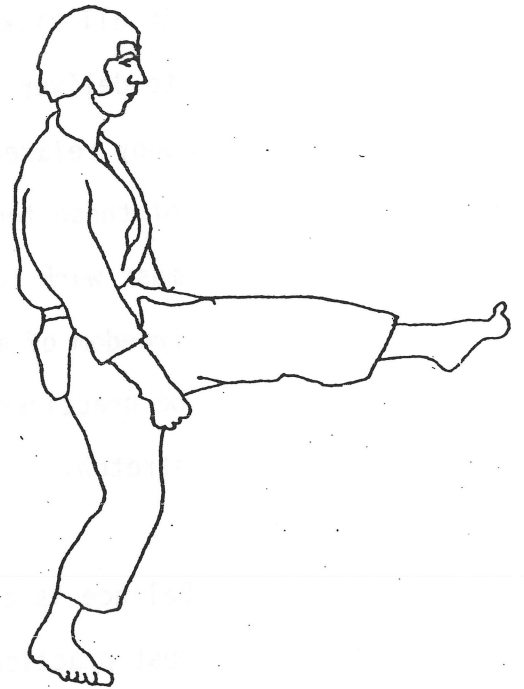


Figure 32

Front kick. Because it travels up the length of the opponent's body, the front kick is versatile, yet it can also be very fast and strong. The foot is formed with the ankle turned downward for maximum extension, and the toes are curled upward so that impact is with the ball of the foot. Prepare for the kick by raising the knee as high as possible in front of the chest (Figure 31). This move, like all parts of all techniques, should be performed very quickly and precisely. Deliver the kick forward in a rapid, snapping motion, driving the ball of the foot into the target (Figure 32). The kick is demonstrated on the opposite side here, so that the right fist, in an optional blocking position, may be clearly observed. Recover the kick back fully into the preparation position, with the knee high, then lower it to the floor. Recovery is important. Do not lower the foot directly to the floor after impact, recover it completely. Avoid ducking the head or flexing the knees at the beginning of the technique. Keep the body upright and relaxed, with the supporting foot in even contact with the floor.



Figure 33

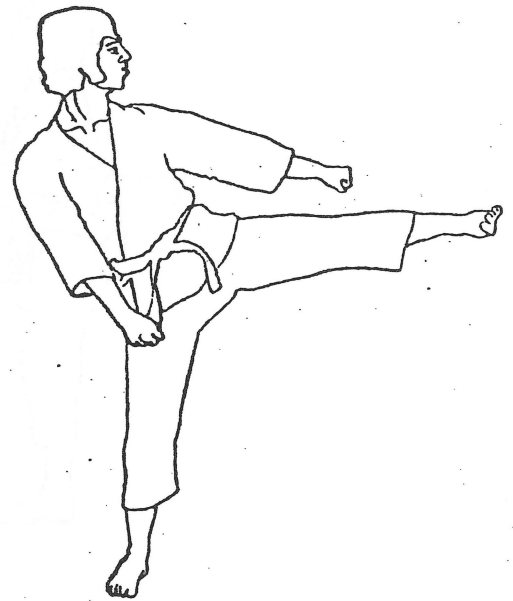


Figure 34

Side kick. Beginning students should concentrate on delivering this kick with a strong thrusting motion to the side. Another version, the side snap kick, which moves upward in an arc, may be studied at an intermediate or advanced level. It does not have the straight line power of the side thrust kick. Prepare by raising the knee above the chest with the bottom of the foot flat (Figure 33). It is also acceptable to prepare and execute the technique with the edge of the foot turned slightly outward. Snap the head in the direction of the opponent and immediately thrust the foot out straight, into the target. Strike with the foot horizontal. Do not allow the toes to rotate upward. Impact is with the outside edge of the foot, just below the ankle bone (Figure 34). Recover the kick high in front of the chest, in exactly the same position as for preparation. Keep the body upright during execution and recovery, then lower the foot to the floor. Remember to thrust the leg out fully, driving into the opponent. Do not deliver a weak, pushing kick.

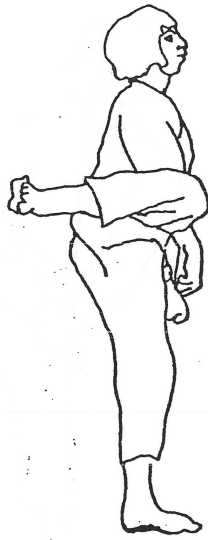


Figure 35

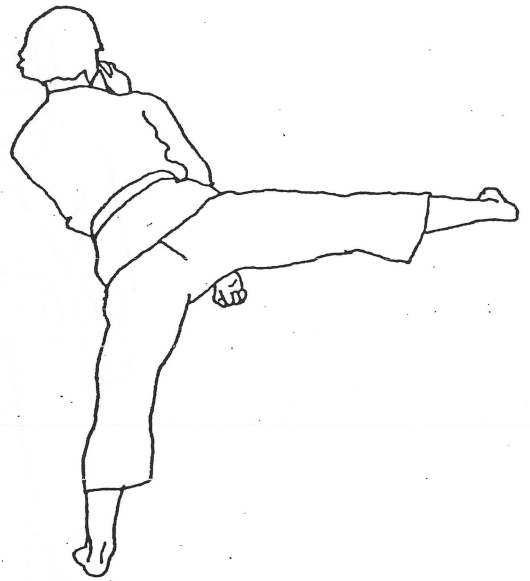


Figure 36

Roundhouse kick. While it may not be universally viewed as a basic Shorin-Ryu technique, the roundhouse kick is, nonetheless, regularly practiced in AKF schools and is, thus, included here. It is best understood as a front kick, turned sideways. The configuration of the foot is exactly the same, with the ankle turned down and the toes curled back, so that impact is with the ball of the foot. Prepare by raising the leg to the side, so that the hip, knee and foot are the same height (Figure 35). Snap the leg around the front, into the opponent, extending the knee fully and turning the kicking hip into the movement of the leg and foot. It may also be necessary to turn the supporting foot slightly, so that the hip may be extended all the way into the direction of attack. Recover the kick back to the ready position, with the foot, knee and hip the same height. Then lower the leg to the ground. A common error is to swing the foot at the opponent, moving too slowly and merely pushing the opponent. Deliver this kick with a fast, precise snap.



Figure 37

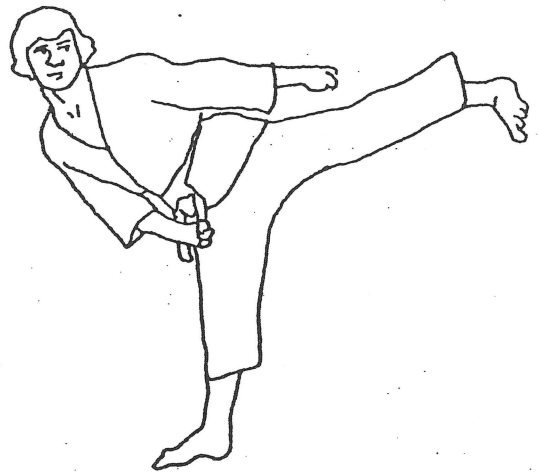
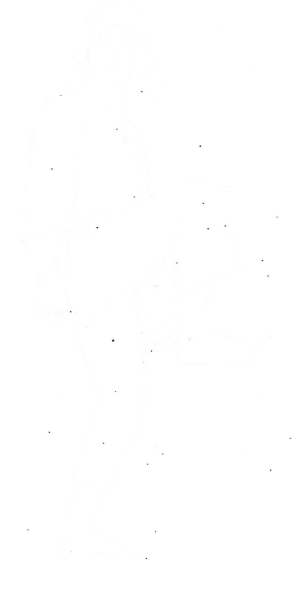


Figure 38

Back kick. Like the roundhouse, this kick, too, may fall outside the body of basic Shorin-Ryu karate, but it is a useful attack, commonly taught in the AKF. The kick is delivered directly to the rear, as high as possible. The front part of the foot is turned upward, toward the shin, so that the heel may be as exposed as possible for impact with the target. Prepare by raising the knee in front of the chest, with the foot turned upward, and snapping the head over the attacking shoulder to gain a view of the target (Figure 37). This technique should never be thrown blind. Thrust the foot straight back into the opponent, aiming high (Figure 38). Recover quickly to the ready position, just as for preparation, with the knee high in front of the chest. After recovery, lower the kick to the floor. A great danger in this technique is losing sight of the opponent and exposing the back to counterattack. Keep the opponent in sight at all times and recover the kick cleanly and quickly.



Blocks

Blocks are of an offensive nature in Shorin-Ryu karate. They are used to open the opponent and to expose him to blows or kicks. Blocks, thus, are an integral part of attack. They are not to be considered as elements of passive defense. All students should understand this thoroughly.

Instructors should drill students in combination techniques, with each block followed by the appropriate blow or kick. Blocks are discussed and illustrated here as single moves only so that they may be understood technically. All blocks can and should be delivered hard enough to injure the opponent. Hardening the blocking surfaces of the arm is an important component of training.

As with any upper-body technique, avoid bending or leaning into the opponent. Good stance and posture are particularly important because the body must be arranged so that each block may be followed immediately by the next appropriate component of the attack. Remember that passive defense is not taught in the American Karate Federation. Blocks are an element of attack.

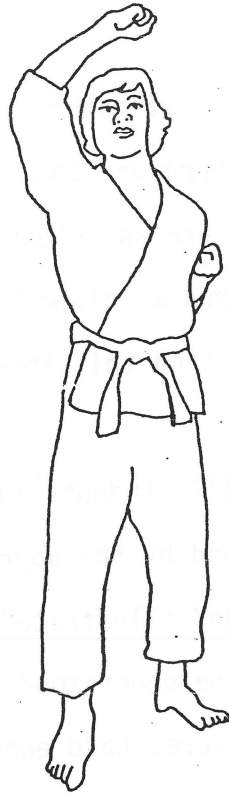


Figure 39

High block. Moving upward, the high block must be delivered quickly, with the fist clenched and the wrist properly formed, as for a straight punch. Preparation, too, is exactly the same as for a punch, with the fist back behind the chest. Be sure that the shoulders remain relaxed during preparation and all through the execution of the block. A common error is to tighten or hunch the shoulders. Rotate the arm upward so that the forearm is above and slightly in front of the head (Figure 39). The fist should be even with the opposite side of the head and the arm declined downward to the elbow at approximately forty-five degrees, so that the opponent's limb will slide off. The palm should be turned so that the outside edge of the wrist and forearm, rather than the tendons of the wrist, makes impact with the opponent. Avoid the other common error of slightly dropping the forearm from the ready position before moving it up into the block. Raise the fist directly up from the armpit, with the shoulders relaxed.

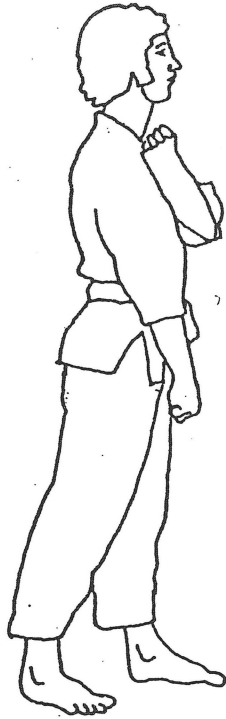


Figure 40



Figure 41

Chest block. Covering the area between the throat and the lowest rib, the chest block knocks the opponent's limb to the side and exposes the center of his body to blows or kicks. Prepare by clenching the fist at or near the opposite shoulder (Figure 40). Keep the wrist straight, the shoulders relaxed, and the spine straight. Deliver the block in a fast, flat, horizontal arc, ending in front of the shoulder on the blocking side (Figure 41). Maintain a ninety degree angle at the elbow, between the forearm and the upper arm, and end with the wrist at the height of the shoulder.



Figure 42

Chest block, continued. The chest block travels only as far as the shoulder. Avoid the common error of following the opponent's limb too far to the side. In practice, discipline and control the block so that it stops at the edge of the body (Figure 42). Movement of the block should be as flat as possible; do not roll the arm upward into the technique. This block and all others should strike the opponent's limb, not push it.



Figure 43



Figure 44

Open hand block. Although it is quite similar to the chest block, the open hand block has the advantage of providing a quick blocking option for those occasions when the hand is open and there is no time to clench the fist properly. Prepare as for a chop to the side, with the hand formed properly in the ready position for a chop. The thumb is tucked across the palm, the edge of the hand and wrist are turned so that the bone at the base of the wrist is exposed for impact (Figure 43). Deliver the block just as a chest block is done, in a flat arc to the side, stopping at the shoulder (Figure 44). The palm of the other hand is brought up in front of the lower torso and turned toward the opponent. As illustrated here, the open hand block is usually delivered from either a cat stance, as in the first illustration, or a walking stance, as in the second illustration.



Figure 45

Open hand block, continued. Impact with the open hand block is with the back or outside edge of the hand or forearm. Maintain even height, as with the chest block. Swing the open hand block in a flat arc, ending at the shoulder (Figure 45). Do not roll it upward into position or extend the technique beyond the edge of the body. Keep the thumb cocked across the palm, and move the other hand into proper blocking position in front of the lower abdomen with the palm facing forward. Both shoulders should be even and relaxed.



Figure 46

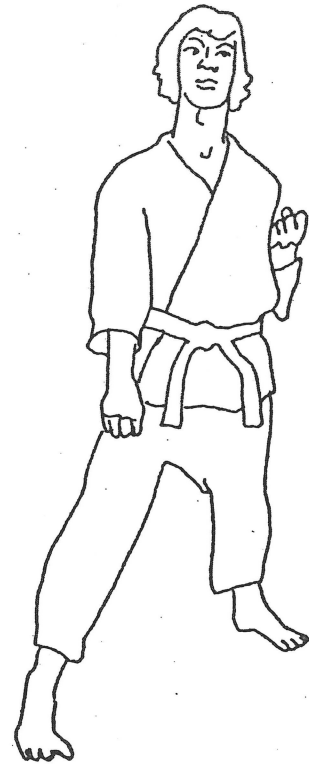


Figure 47

Down block. Because it has the additional assistance of gravity, the down block is particularly strong. Prepare by clenching the fist, with the hand and wrist in punch position, at or near the opposite shoulder (Figure 46). The down block is usually delivered from the front stance. Swing the arm down strongly, across the lower abdomen and groin, stopping approximately three inches above the knee. Do not extend the hand beyond the edge of the body. Stop it even with the knee. This block often engages the opponent's foot or shin, so it must be delivered with as much power and speed as possible, with the fist tightly clenched. Remember that the block swings across the lower abdomen and groin, covering the entire lower body. Do not bring it straight down on the attacking side, but swing it across the body to lock in front of the knee (Figure 47).