

KARATE

FOR JUNIORS

VOLUME 1 : BASICS



BY DONG TRAN

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Preface from the Author

Karate was introduced to Japan from Okinawa in the 1920's. Since then, it has enjoyed a wide popularity throughout the world and particularly in the United States.

Martial art books and manuals on every system of self-defense abound nowadays and provide the practitioner and the non-initiated alike with a rich source of reference. However, all such material is oriented toward an adult public and largely neglect the needs of a younger audience.

Lacking statistical data to substantiate my views, I can nonetheless draw upon my personal knowledge of children's participation to state that the ratio of children-to-adult involvement in Karate is almost two-to-one.

My aim in presenting this book, therefore, is to provide a basic textbook for the junior Karate-ka and to acquaint the aspiring student (and his/her parents) with a sport which is safe, fun, and exciting.

For those already enrolled in a Karate dojo (school), this book will clarify certain exercises and break down in detail different techniques which you might have learned before in a hurry or whose theory you might have overlooked. Only in understanding theory can you learn technique, and only in learning precision can you acquire form.

For those who are interested in the sport, this book is designed to show you the routines and the basics which are taught in most Karate schools, approximating your first private lesson. It is *not* designed to teach you Karate at home, and certainly does not encourage the use of your brothers and sisters as hapless victims.

Ideally, this book is directed to the responsible parents; to introduce them to a sport which is growing in popularity. If you already have children enrolled in a Karate dojo, this is what they are learning. If you are thinking about enrolling them, this is what they will be going through.

Dong Tran
4th dan, Goju-ryu karate
Asian Arts Center, West Orange, N.J.

"This book is dedicated to Soke Richard Baillargeon and the spirit for which he stands: open-mindedness, open-heartedness, fairness, and truth. Most of all I would like to dedicate it to all children, for they are innocent.

Dong Tran

Brief History of Karate

In 545 A.D., an Indian Buddhist priest by the name of Bodi-Dharma settled at the Shaolin temple in China to spread the faith of his Ch'an (or Zen) sect. Tradition has it that he was also the originator of the famous Shaolin Boxing system which later grew and branched out all over China and her neighboring nations. Karate was then known as "the Chinese hand."

When the Chinese systems reached the Ryu Kyu islands (in particular, Okinawa), they blended with the native fighting arts; this marriage created such a unique system of self-defense that it impressed the Emperor of Japan. Karate was officially brought to Tokyo in 1922 by prof. Funakoshi Gichin who gave it its new and definitive generic name of "the Empty hand."

It was also then that the transition was made from Karate-Jitsu (a technique of combat) to Karate-Do (a way of life, an art).

On Selecting a Karate Dojo

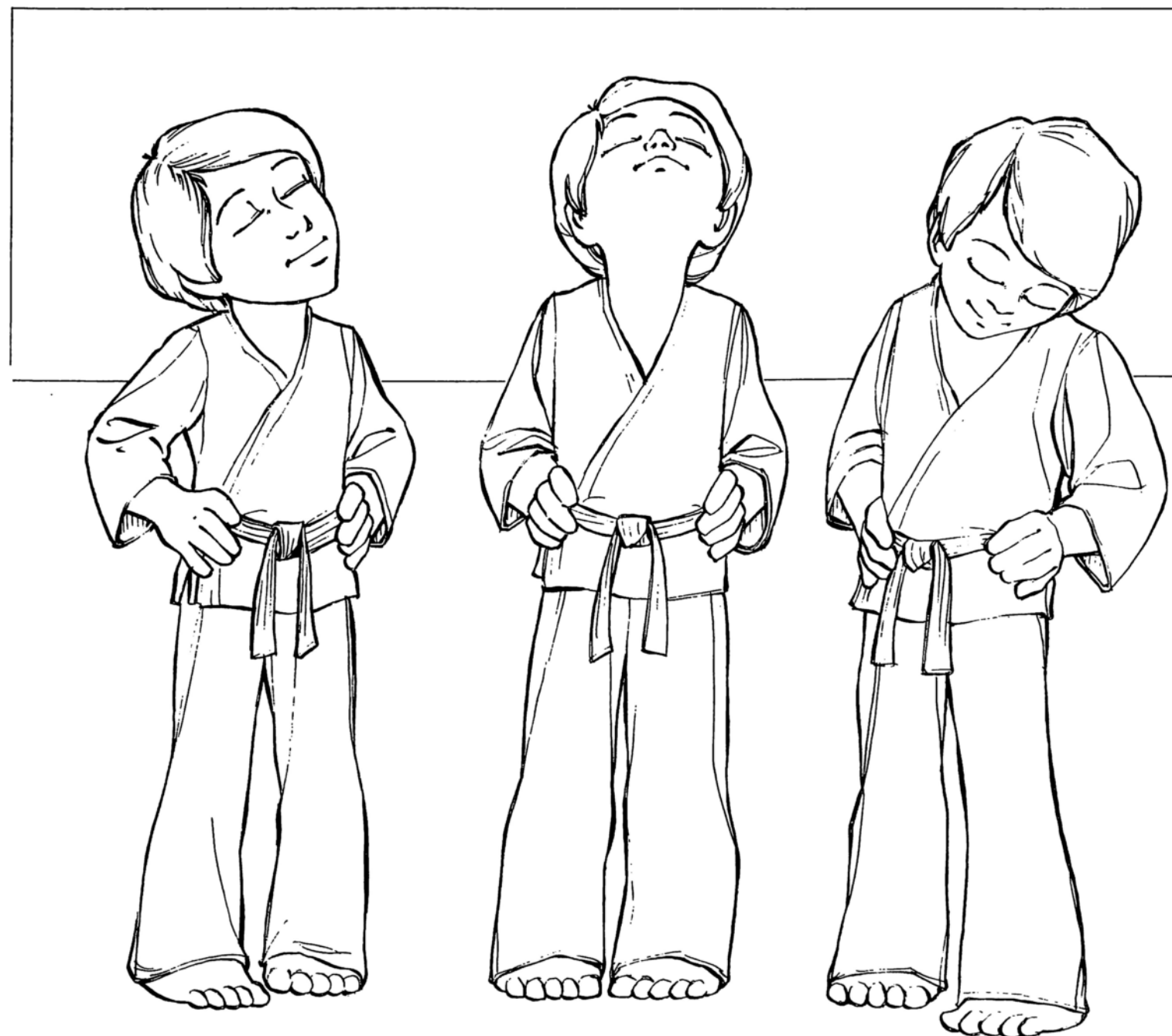
To all concerned parents: great care should be taken in the selection of a Karate dojo for your children, for it is their physical and emotional education that you delegate to instructors. Please consider these steps:

- (1) call up the school of your choice and ask to come and watch a class in session. Watch how the class is conducted and how the instructor relates to the students. If you are not allowed to watch, beware.
- (2) check the instructor's credentials. He should have his official ranking diploma(s) displayed on the wall — much as a doctor's. This determines his qualifications.
- (3) check the school's affiliation. If the school is legitimately sanctioned, it should be affiliated with a national (or international) organization. This membership certificate should also be prominently displayed on the wall.

Last, but not least, the general atmosphere of the school should speak for itself; whether or not it fosters the spirit of courtesy, effort, and discipline.

I. Warm-up exercises

The purpose is to warm up the muscles before strenuous exercises in order to prevent injury. Perform each set of exercises for about 30 seconds.



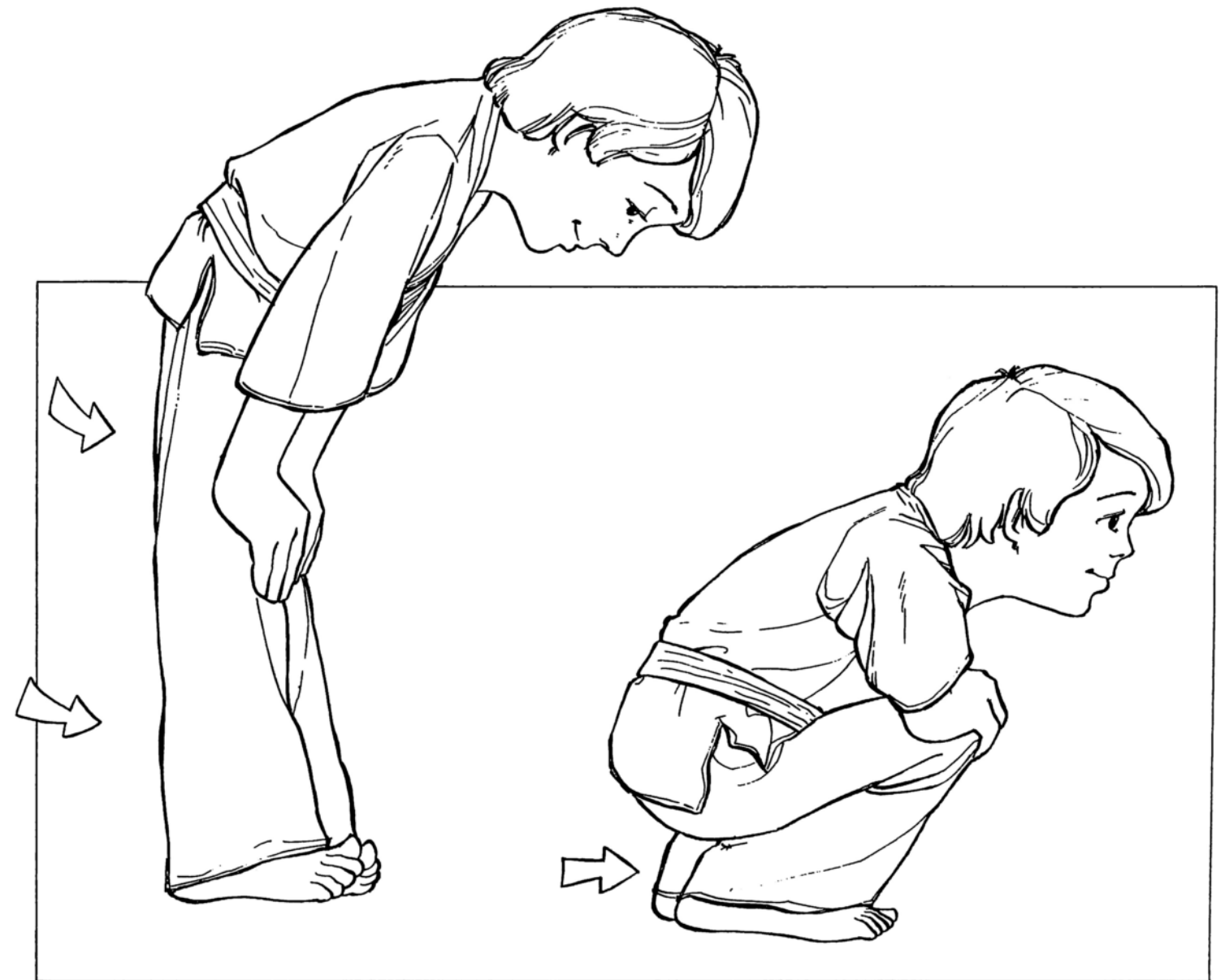
1. Rotating the neck : rotate slowly from side to side, then reverse the motion.

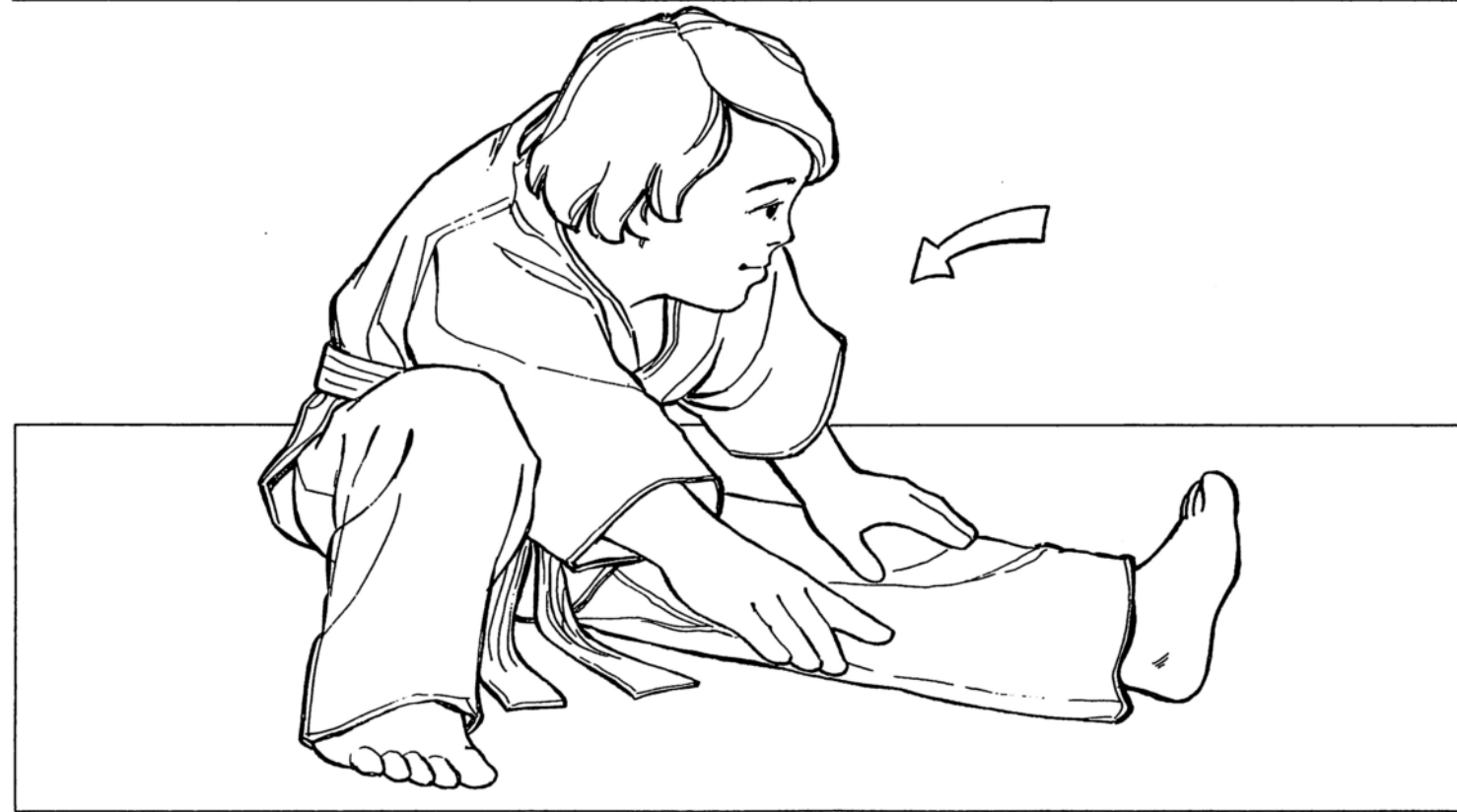
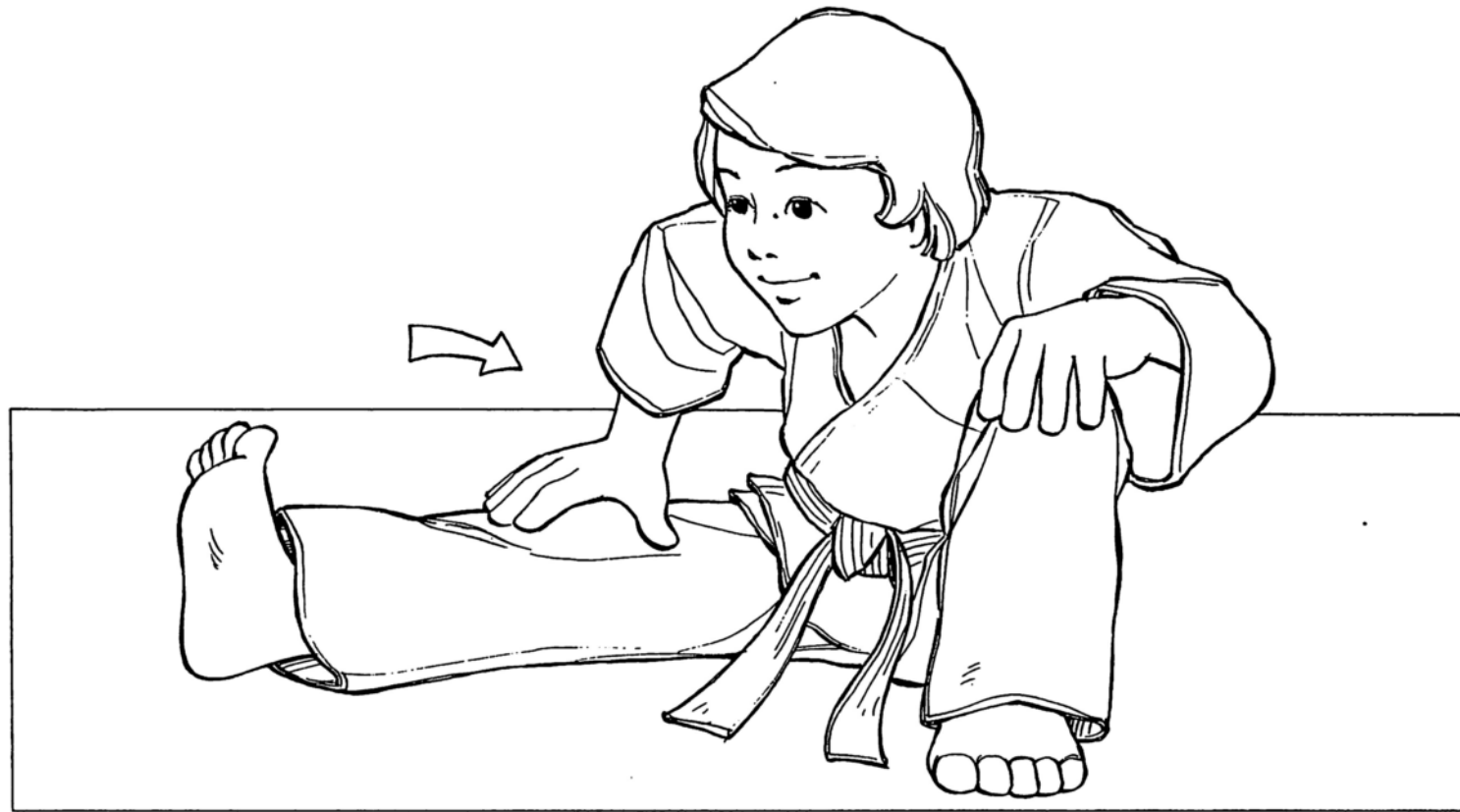


2. **Rotating the arms** : rotate one arm for about 6 times , reverse the motion , then do the other arm .

3. **Squatting to stretch the calves and the achilles' tendon :**

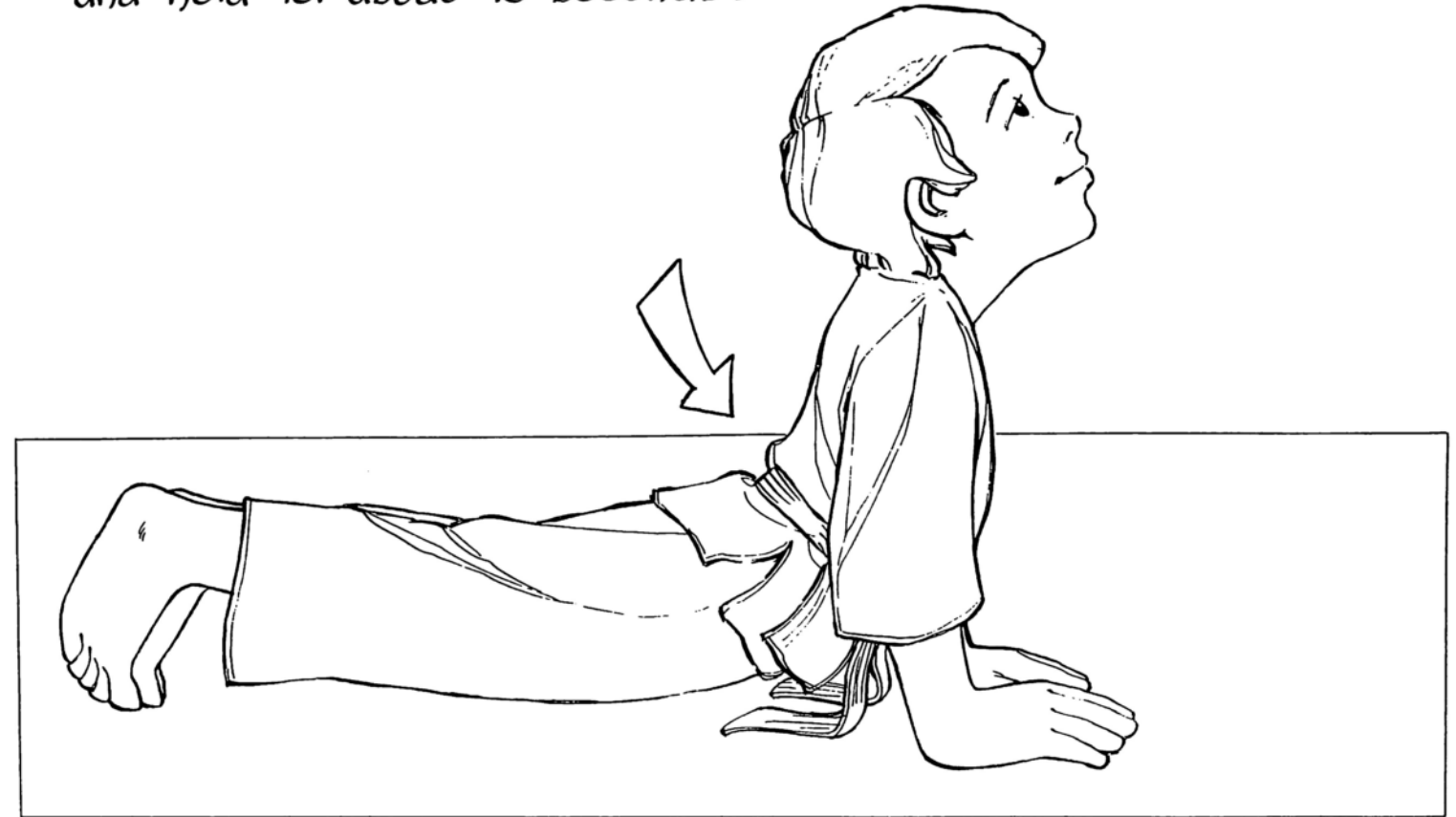
hold each position for about 5 seconds , and repeat the exercise three or four times .



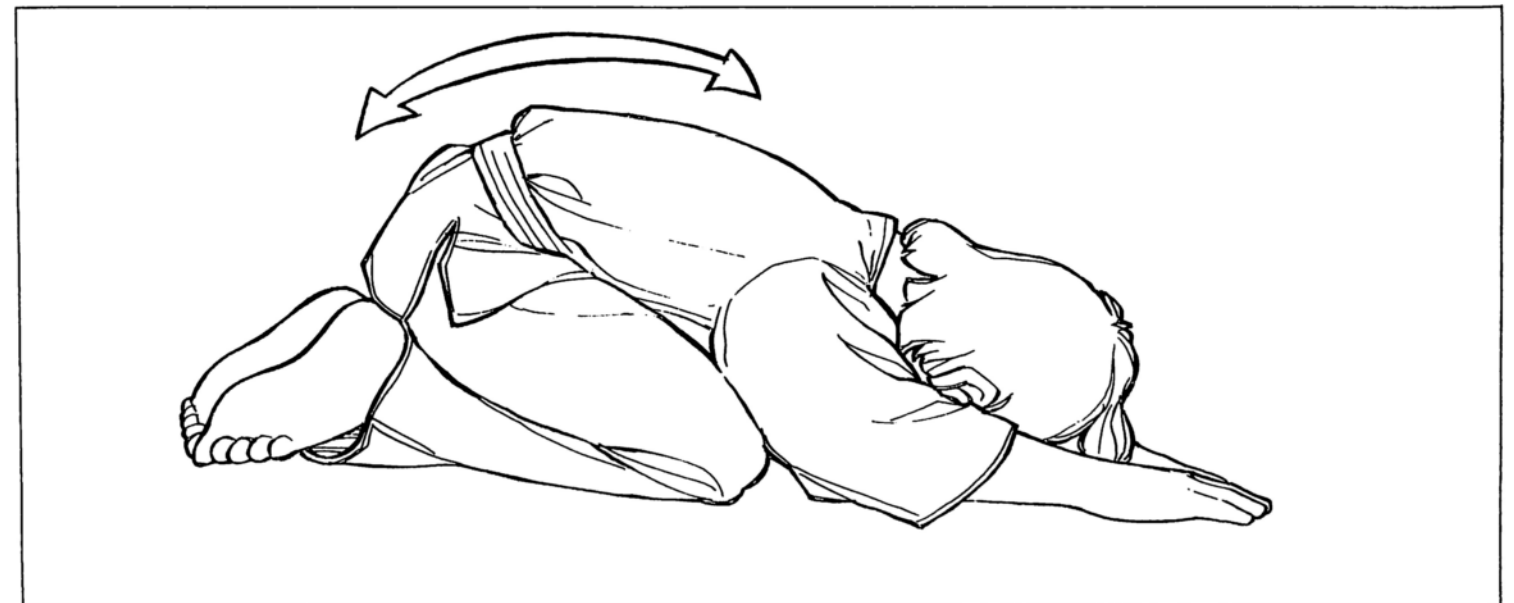


4. **Squatting on one leg** : squat on one side, hold for 5 seconds, then switch side. Repeat 3 times.

5. **Stretching the lower back** : arch the back and hold for about 10 seconds.



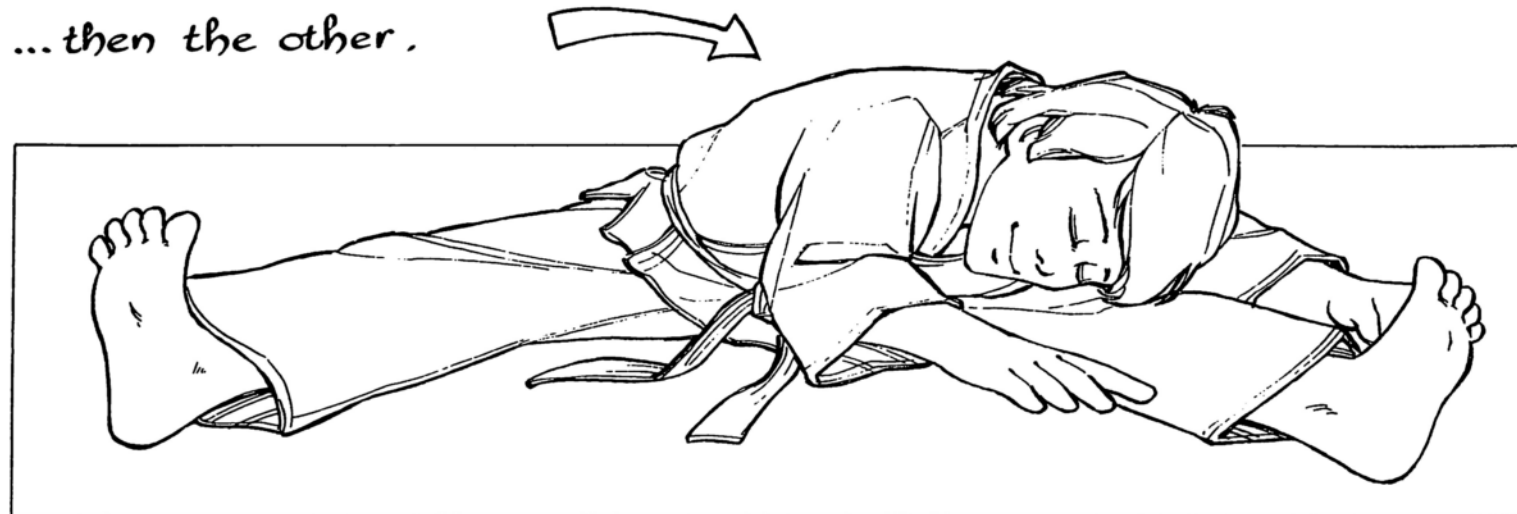
... and the spine : arch the opposite way and hold.



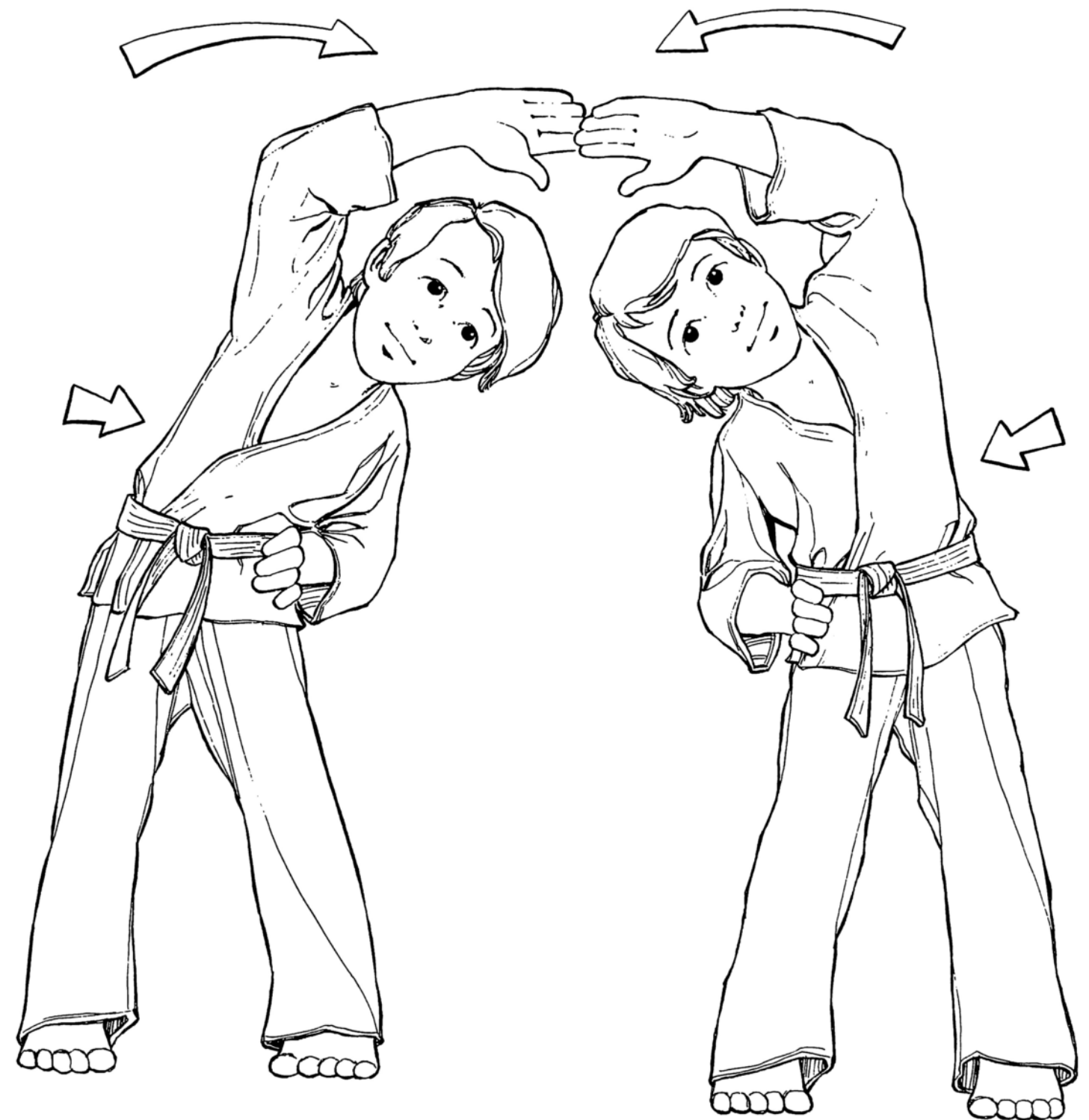
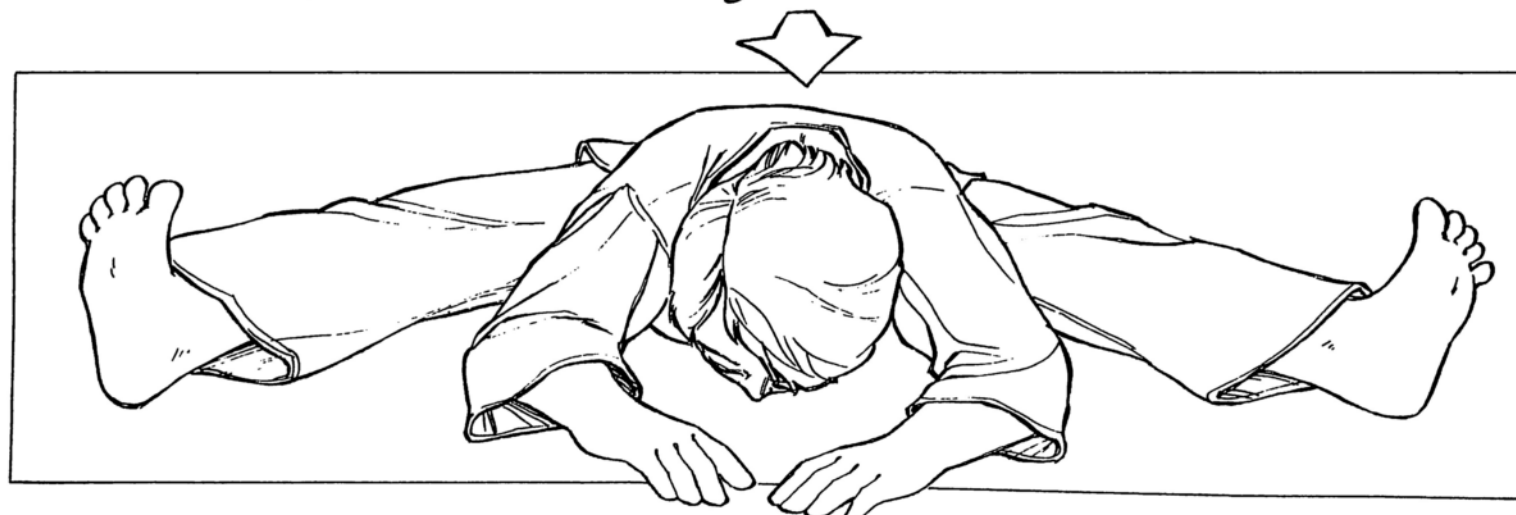
6. Stretching the legs : spread the legs out wide, lean gently to one side ...



... then the other .

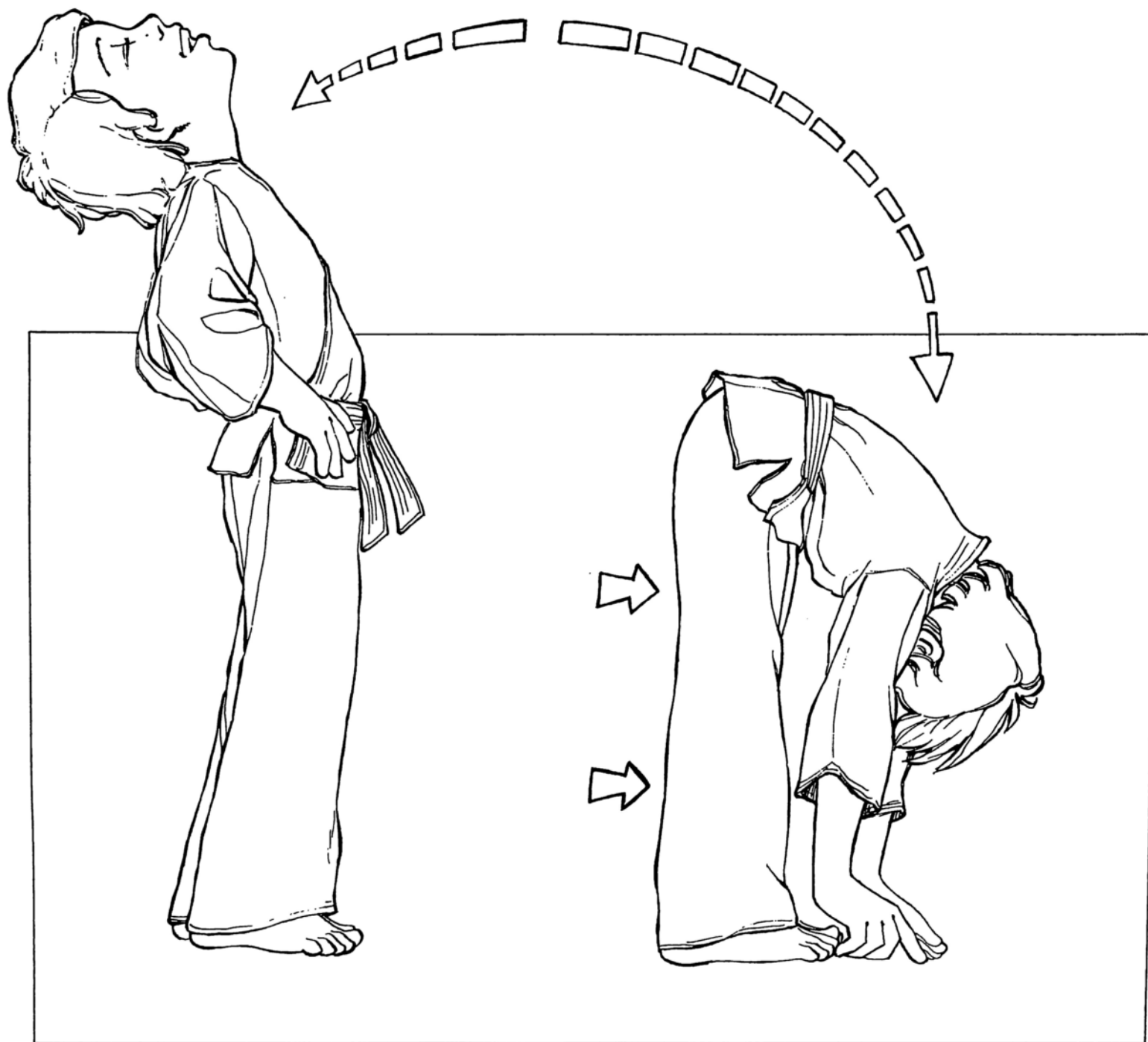


... and the inner thighs : reach out forward and hold .



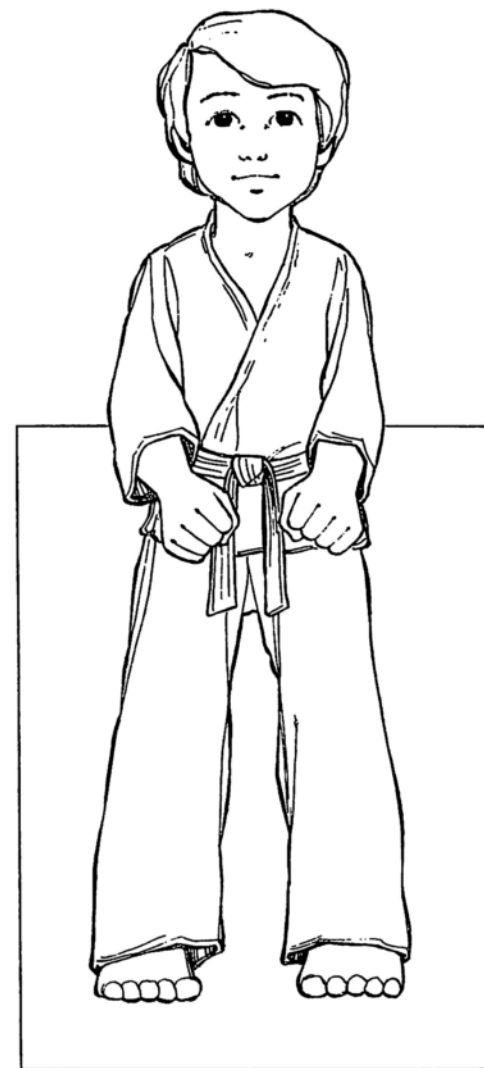
7. Stretching the sides and the hips :
lean gently to one side , hold for a few seconds , then do opposite side . Repeat 3 or 4 times .

Arch back gently, hold for a few seconds, then bend forward, and hold again. Repeat 2 or 3 times.

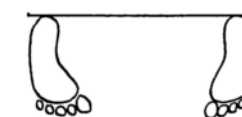


8. Stretching the spine and the legs.

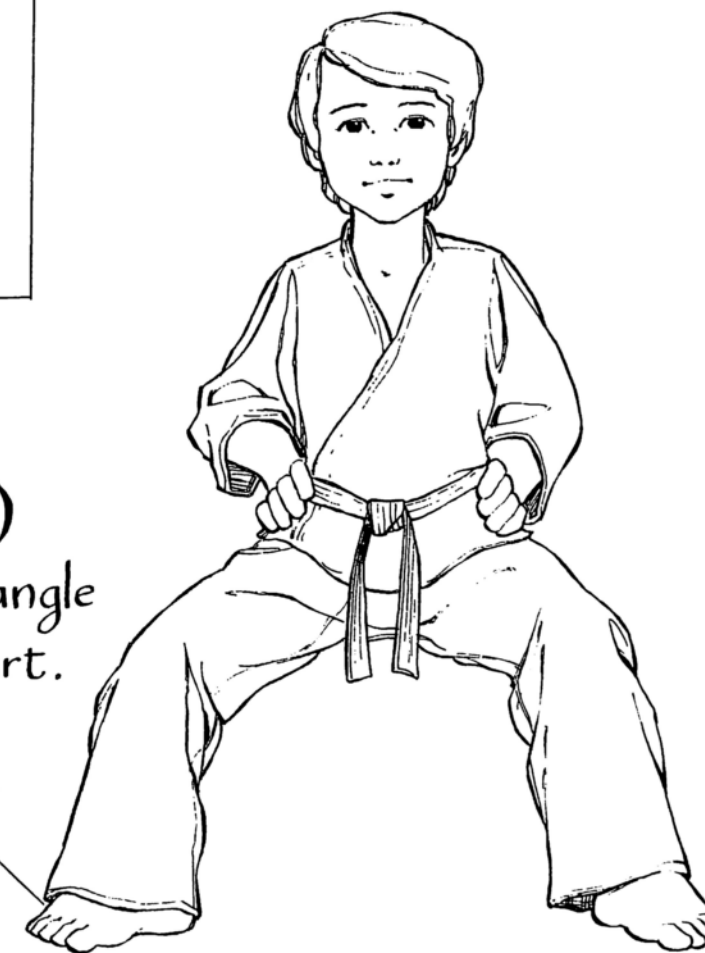
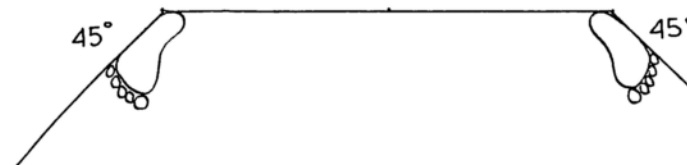
II. Basic stances



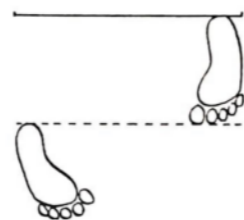
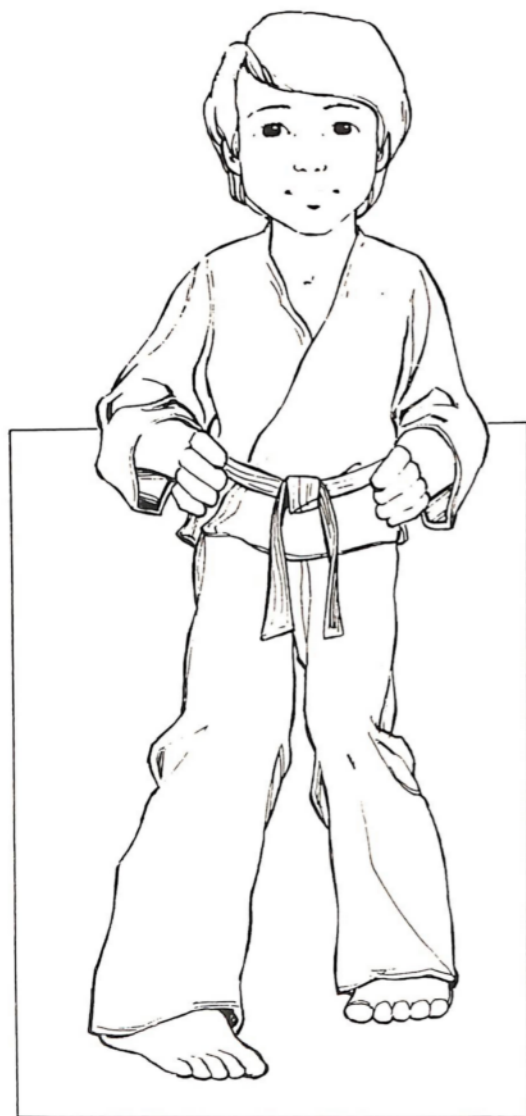
1. Heiko dachi
(Open-ready stance)
Feet pointed straight forward
one shoulder-width apart.



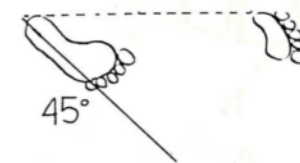
2. Shiko dachi
(Straddle stance)
Feet pointed out at 45° angle
double shoulder-width apart.



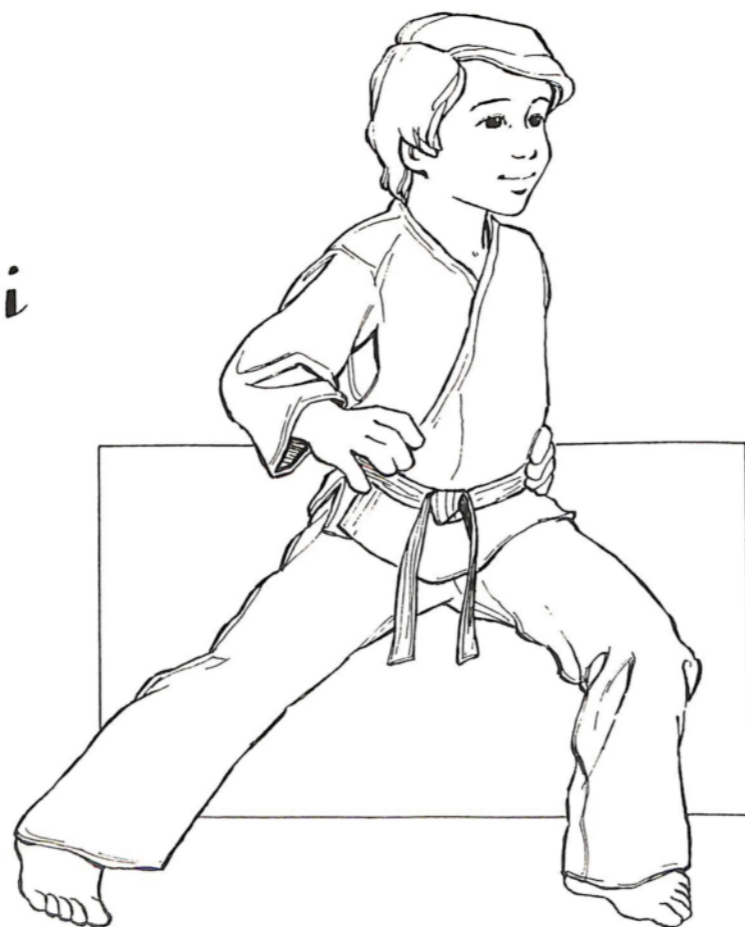
3. Sanchin dachi
(Hour-glass stance)



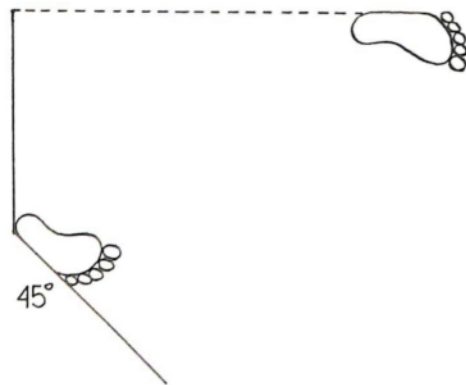
5. Neko-ashi dachi
(Cat stance)
(90% of the weight on rear leg)



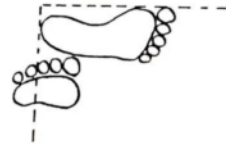
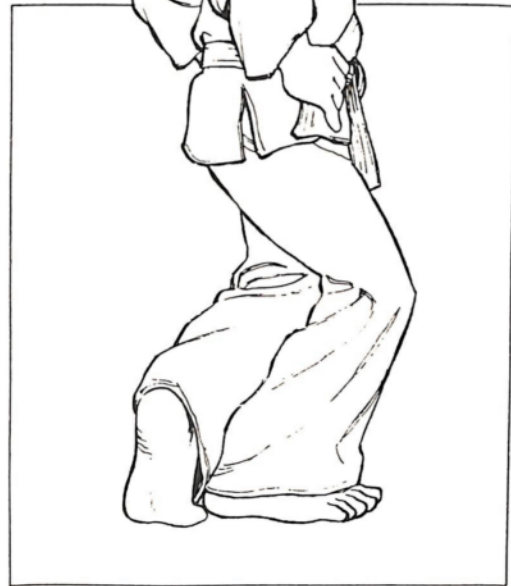
4. Zenkutsu dachi
(Forward stance)



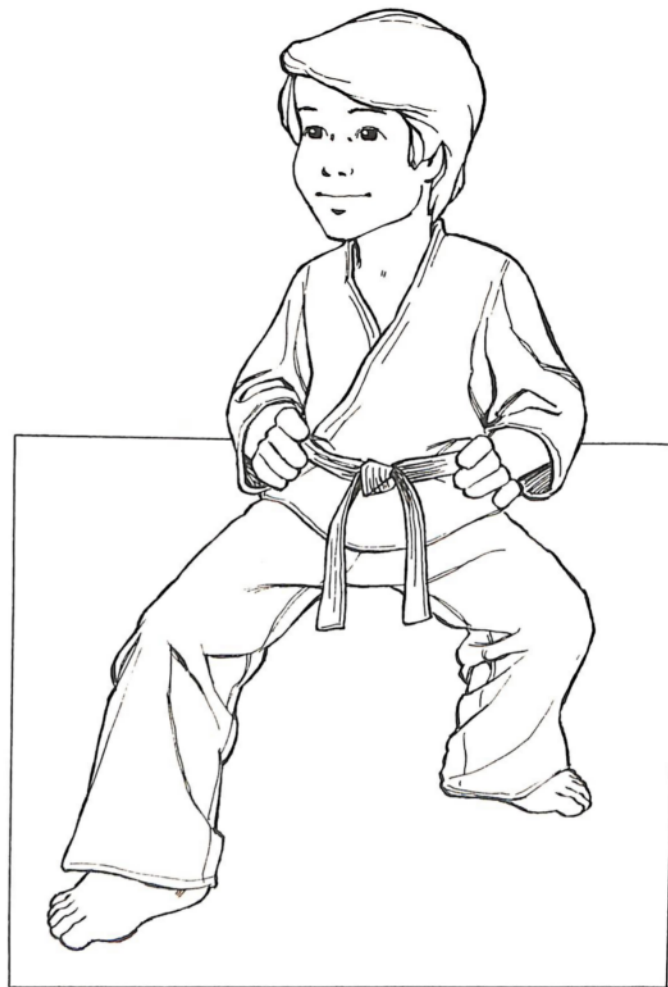
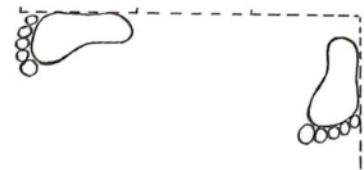
6. Sagi-ashi dachi
(Crane stance)



7. Kosa-ashi dachi (Crossed-legged stance)



8. Kokutsu-dachi (Back stance) (70% of the weight on rear leg)



Basic Blocks

Karate is a system of defense. Therefore, it is only proper that we begin by studying the major blocks. Aiming at defending the three main areas of the body — high (face area), middle (chest area) and low (belt and below) — each block is performed from the right and left side alternately, and it can be performed in any stance, even the open-ready stance.

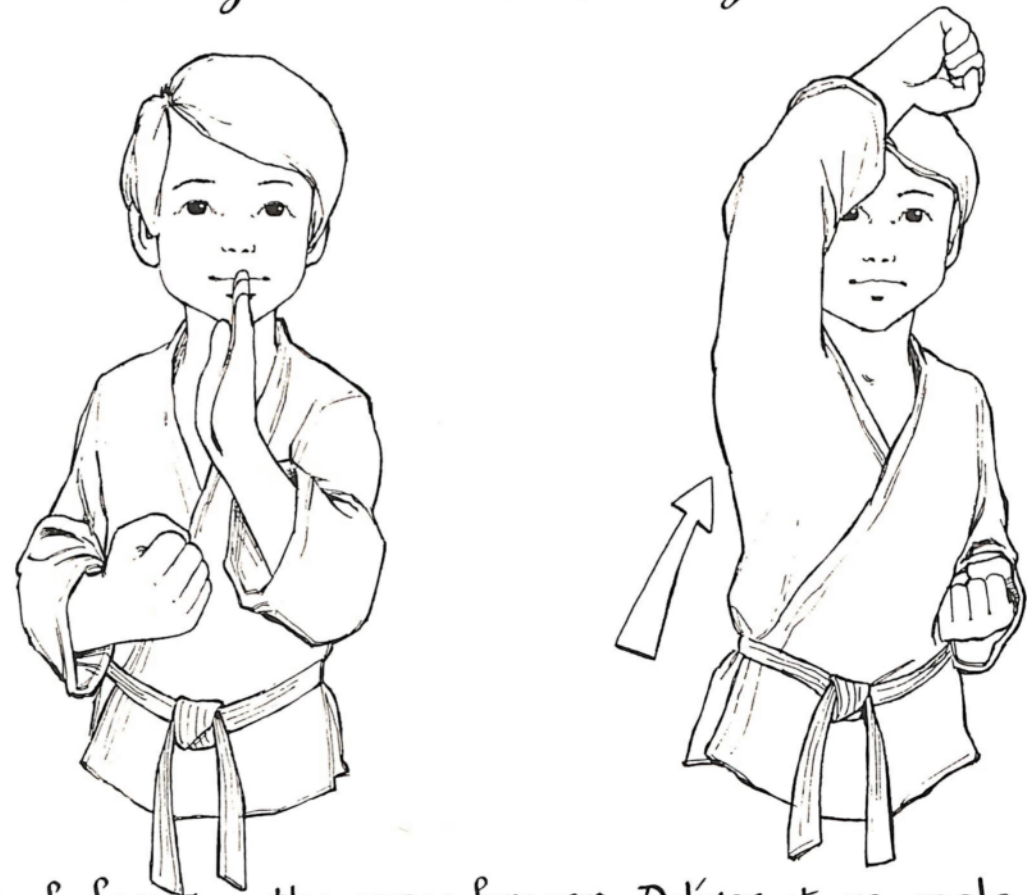
The basis of hand techniques is derived from the action-reaction theory: while one arm thrusts out, the other pulls back with equal force and rests securely on the side, by the floating ribs.

Study the angle of each movement to achieve proper leverage and proper covering of the body.

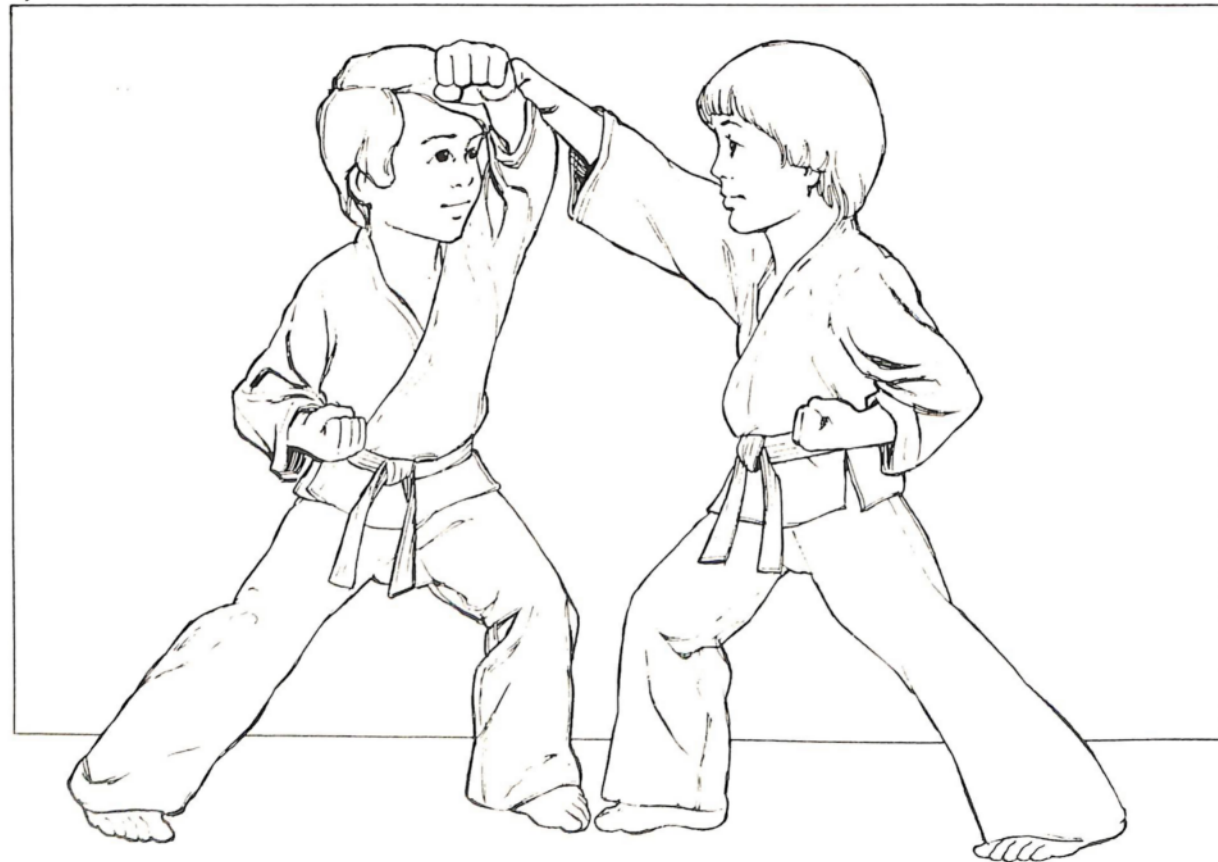
Last, but not least, breathe correctly: exhale at the execution of the technique; inhale as you prepare it. This is your source of energy and your stamina.

III. Basic blocks

1. Jodan age uke (Rising block)

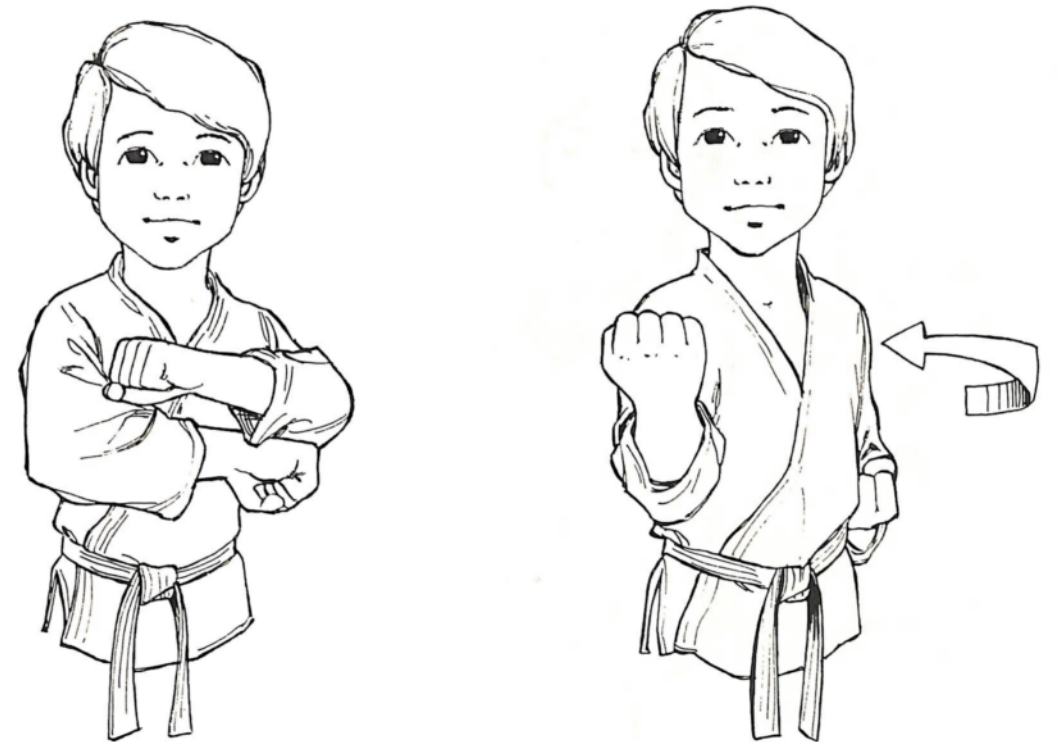


point of focus : the upper forearm. Deliver at an angle.

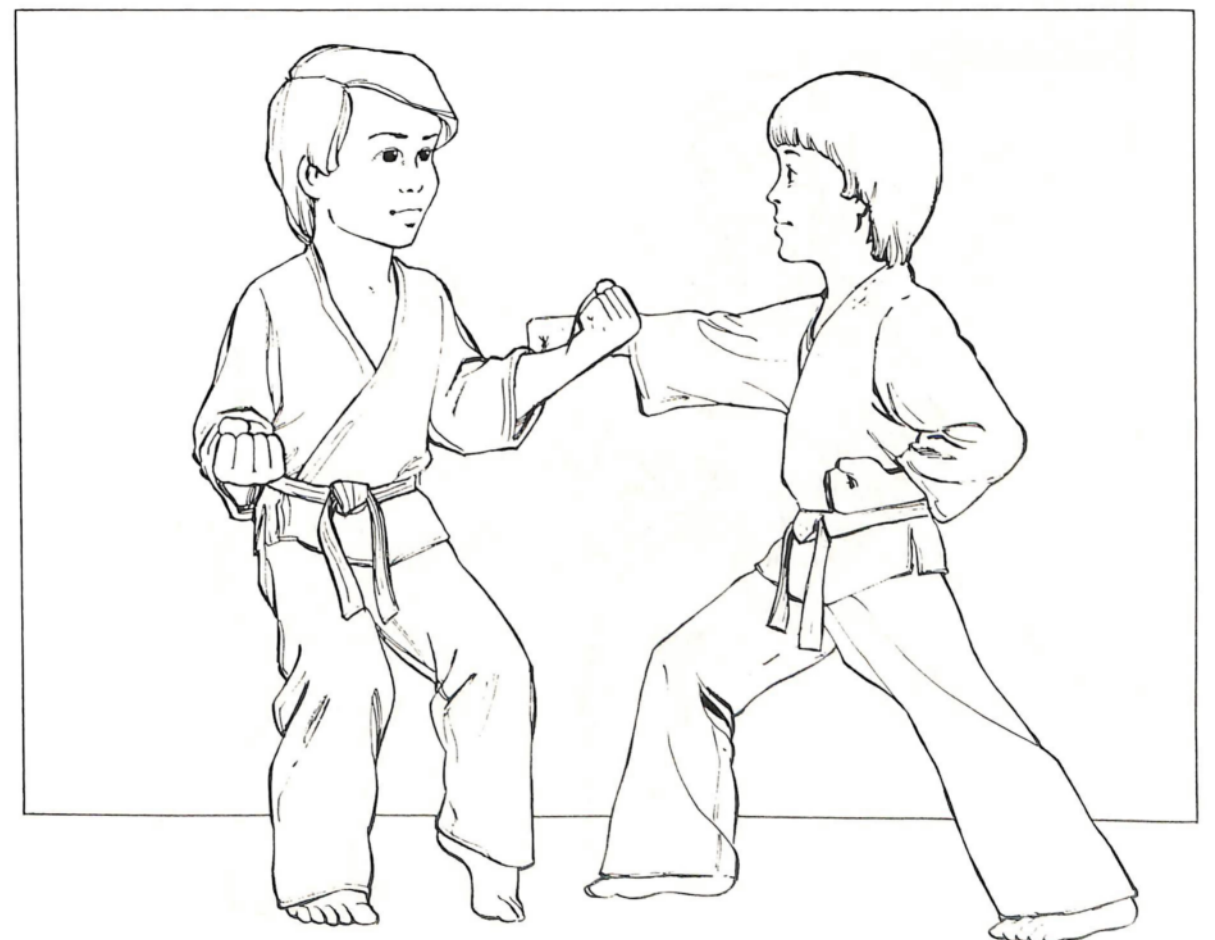


2. Chudan uke (Middle inside block)

Deliver in a fanning, circular motion as the fist twists out.

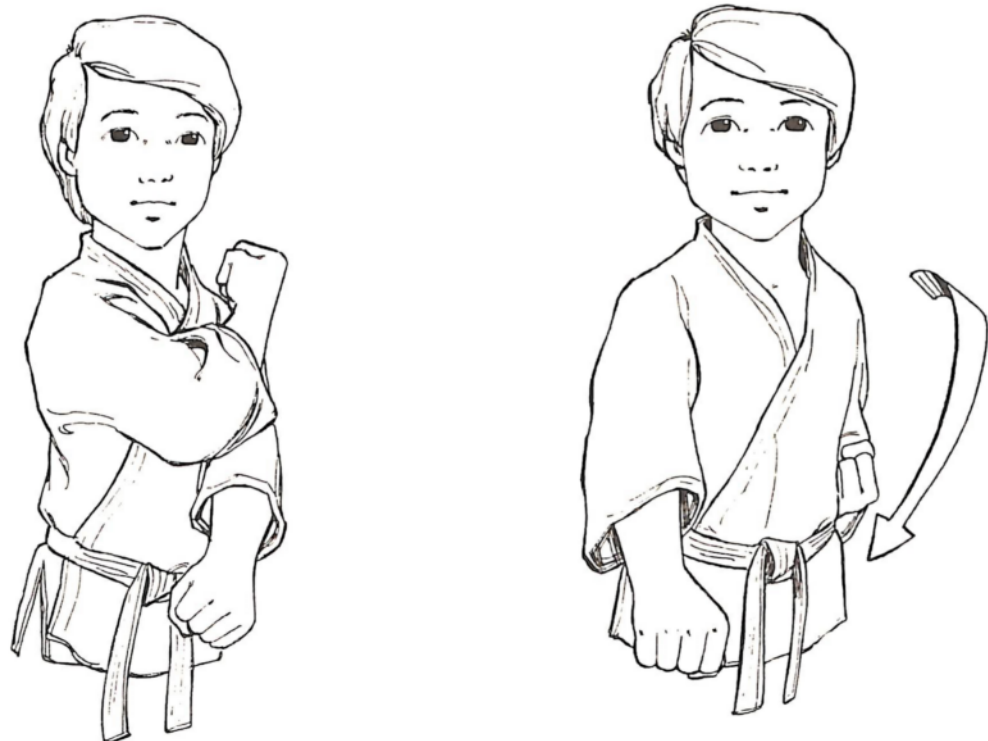


point of focus : the upper inside of the forearm.

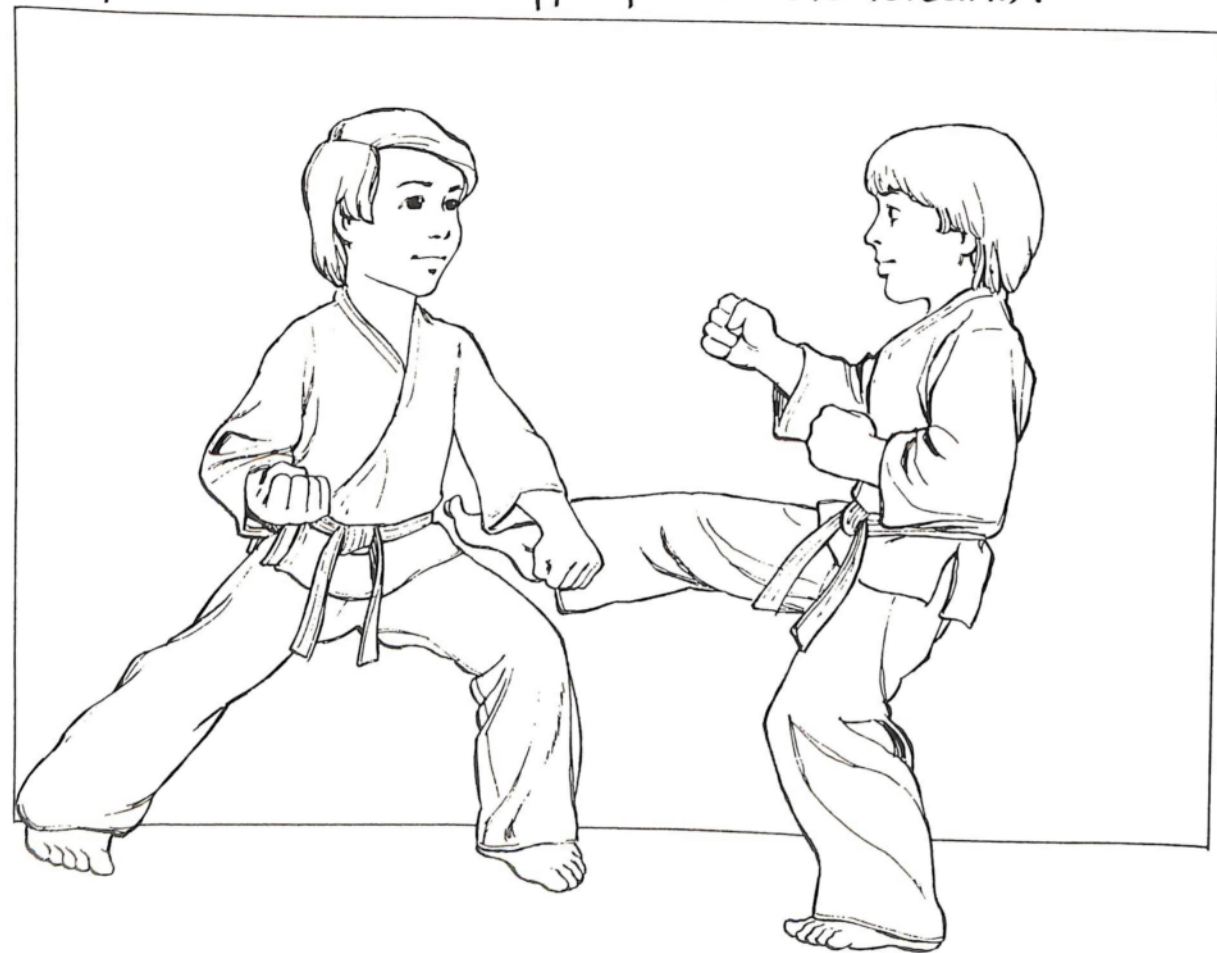


3. Gedan barai (Downward block)

Deliver in a sweeping, downward motion from the shoulder.

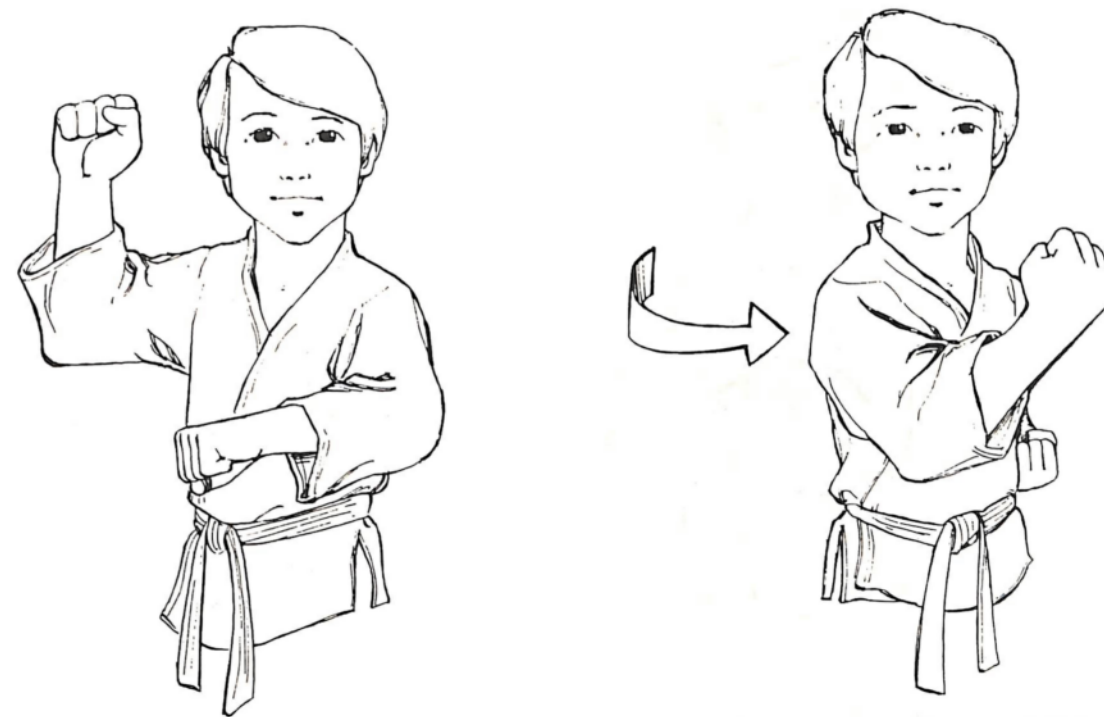


the point of focus is the upper part of the forearm.

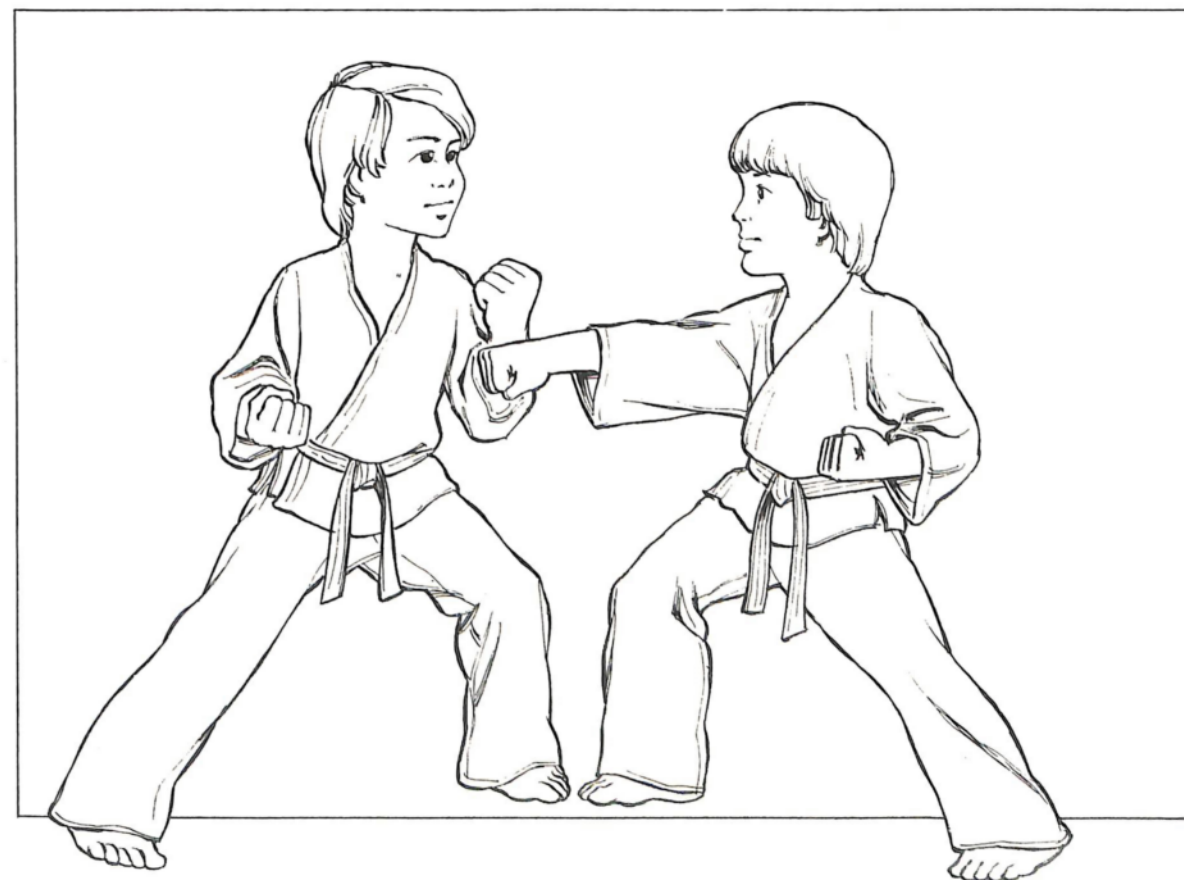


4. Soto uchi (Cross block)

Deliver in a short, circular motion.

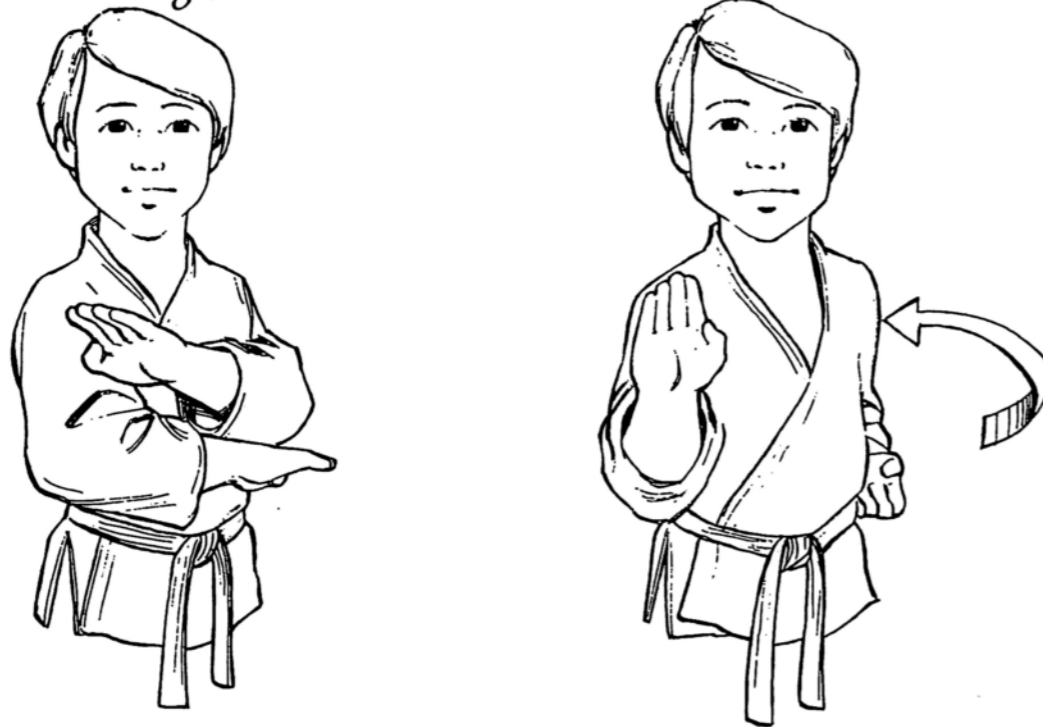


point of focus : the upper part of the forearm.

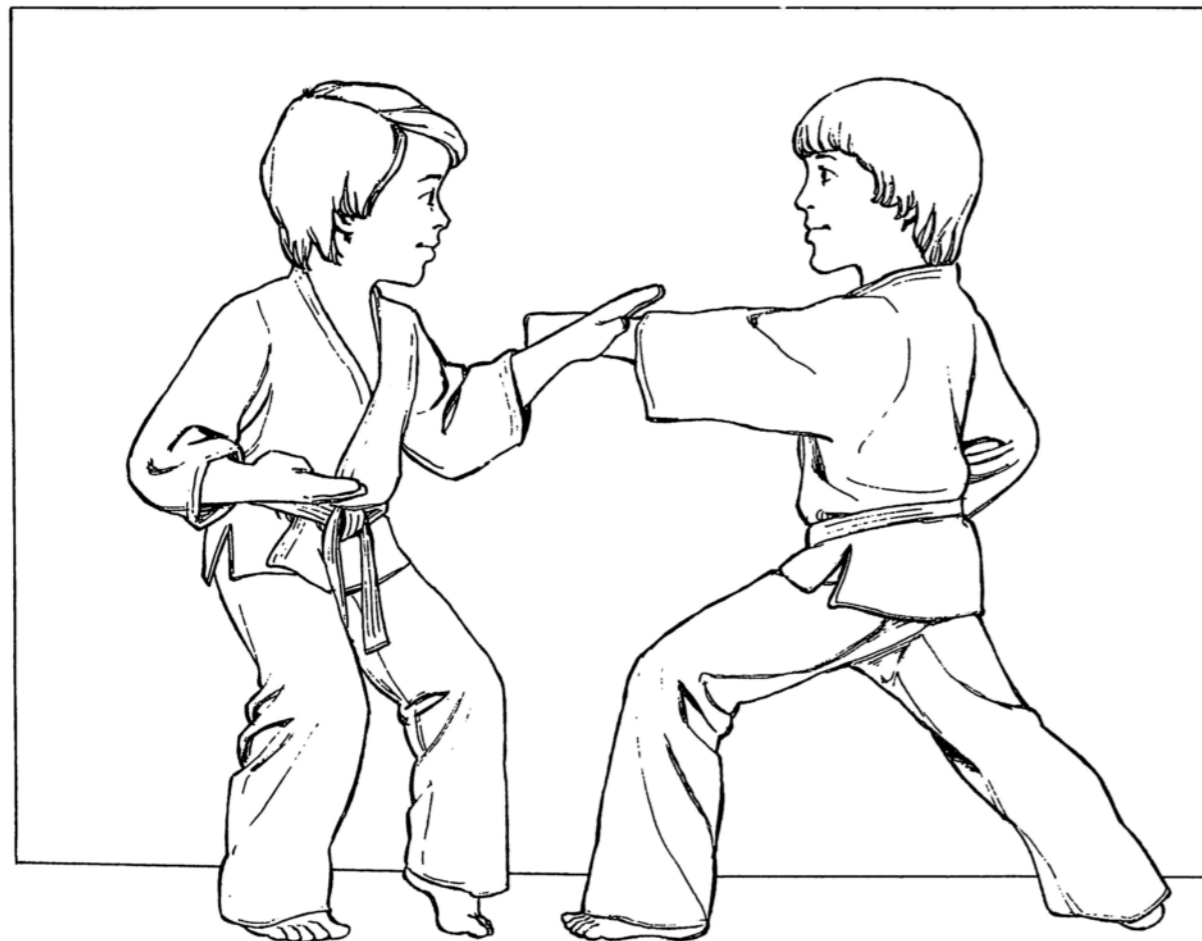


5. Shuto uke (Knife-hand block)

Deliver in a fanning, circular motion.



the point of focus is the edge of the hand, by the wrist.



Basic Strikes

After blocking, we counter-attack. Again, we apply the action-reaction theory to achieve good balance and maximum force.

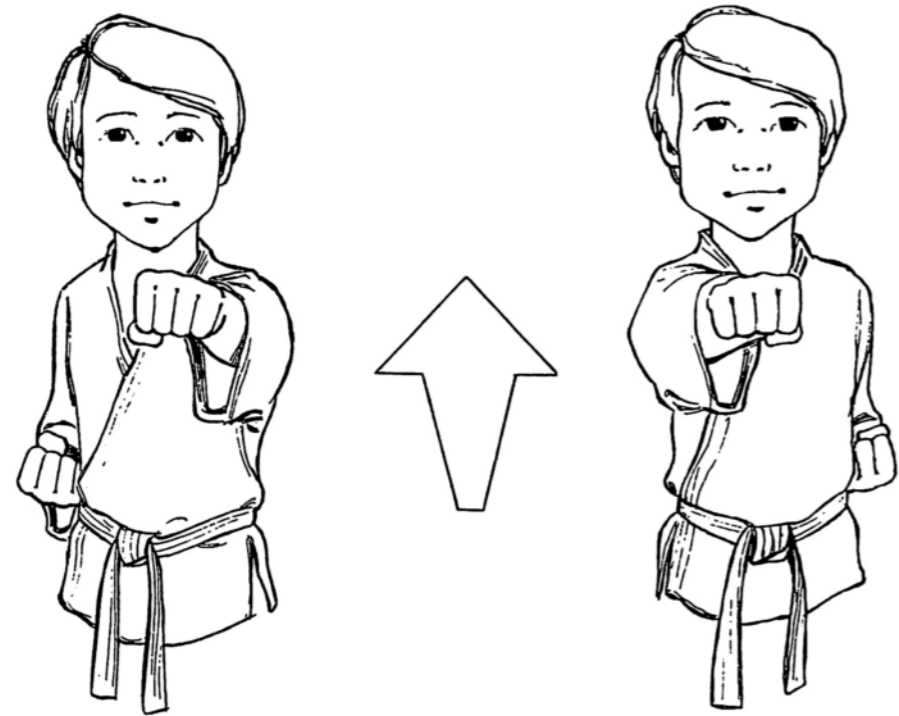
Each strike is performed from the right and left side alternately, and again can be performed in any stance.

Strikes are aimed at either of the three areas mentioned earlier: high (face area), middle (chest area), and low (belt and below).

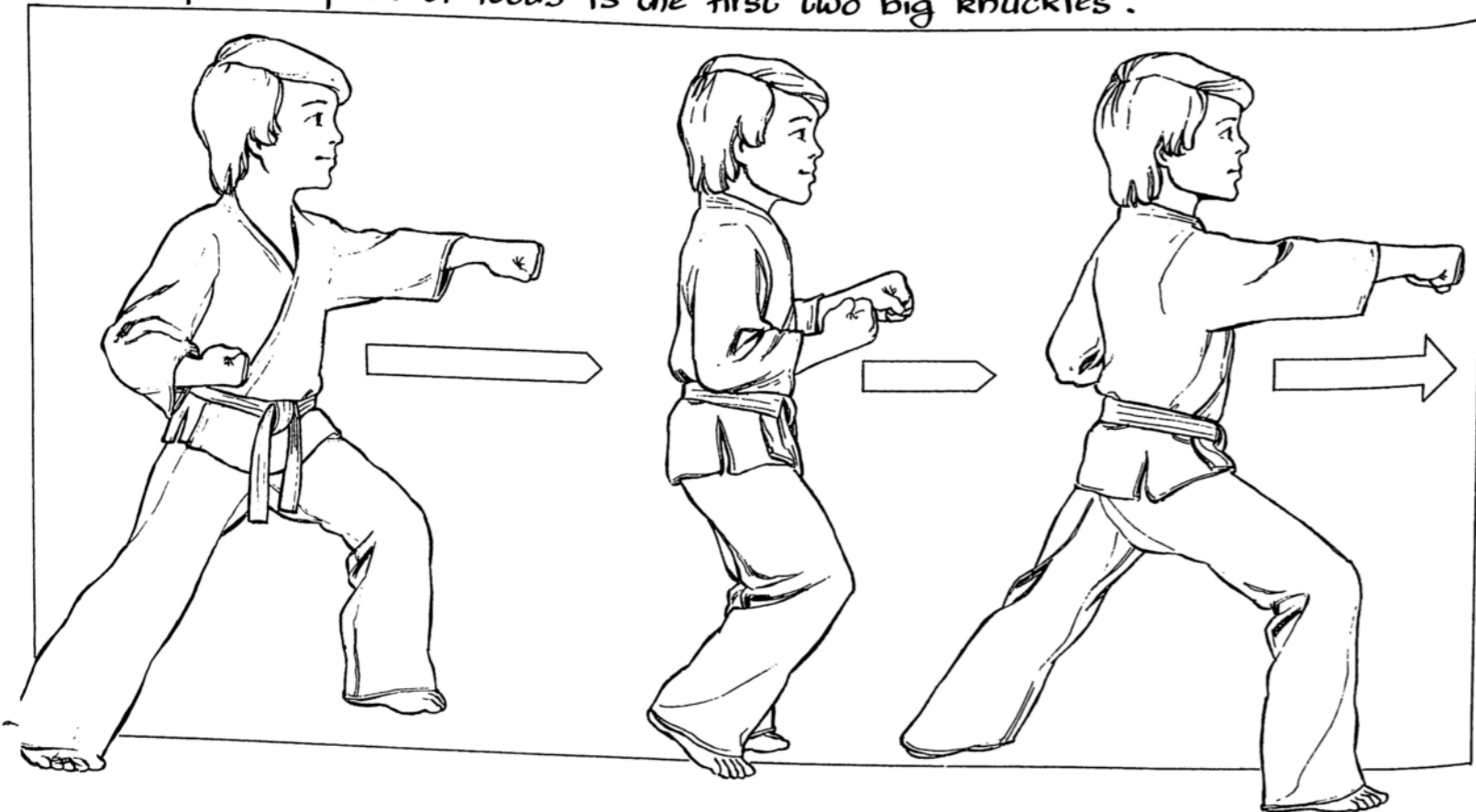
I must emphasize that this is strictly a non-contact sport; therefore, each strike is performed with complete control and stops in front of the target by at least 3 inches.

The emphasis is on good focus, good coordination of the body, good concentration of the mind, and proper breathing.

IV. Basic strikes

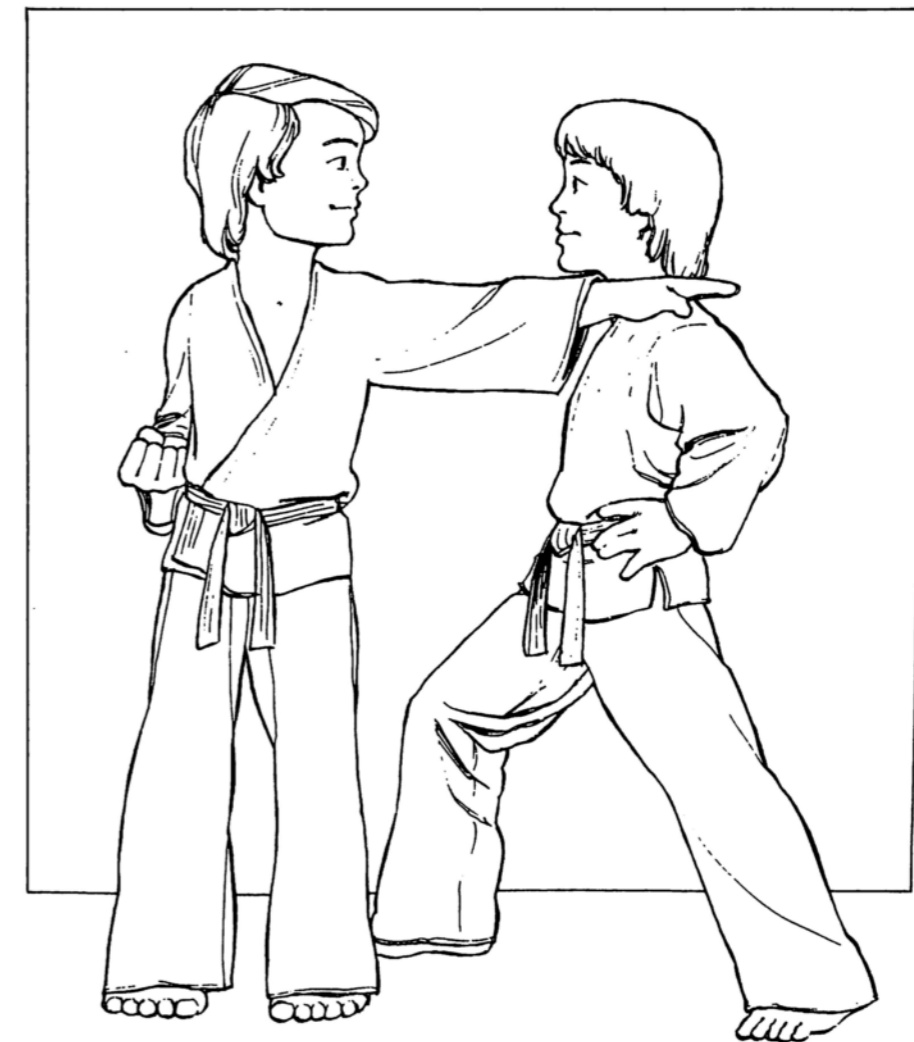
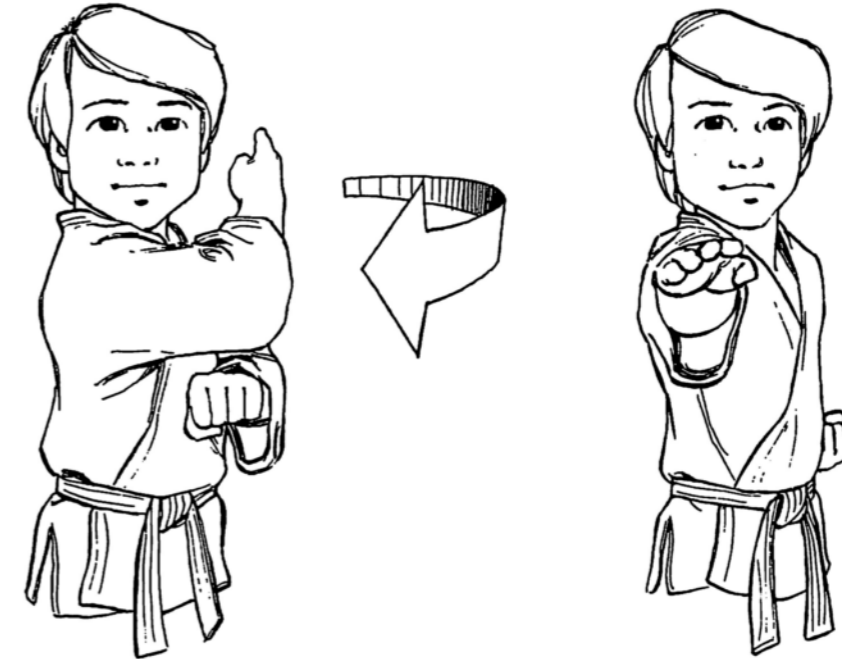


1. *Oi-zuki* (*Lunge punch*): deliver straight from the hip. The point of focus is the first two big knuckles.

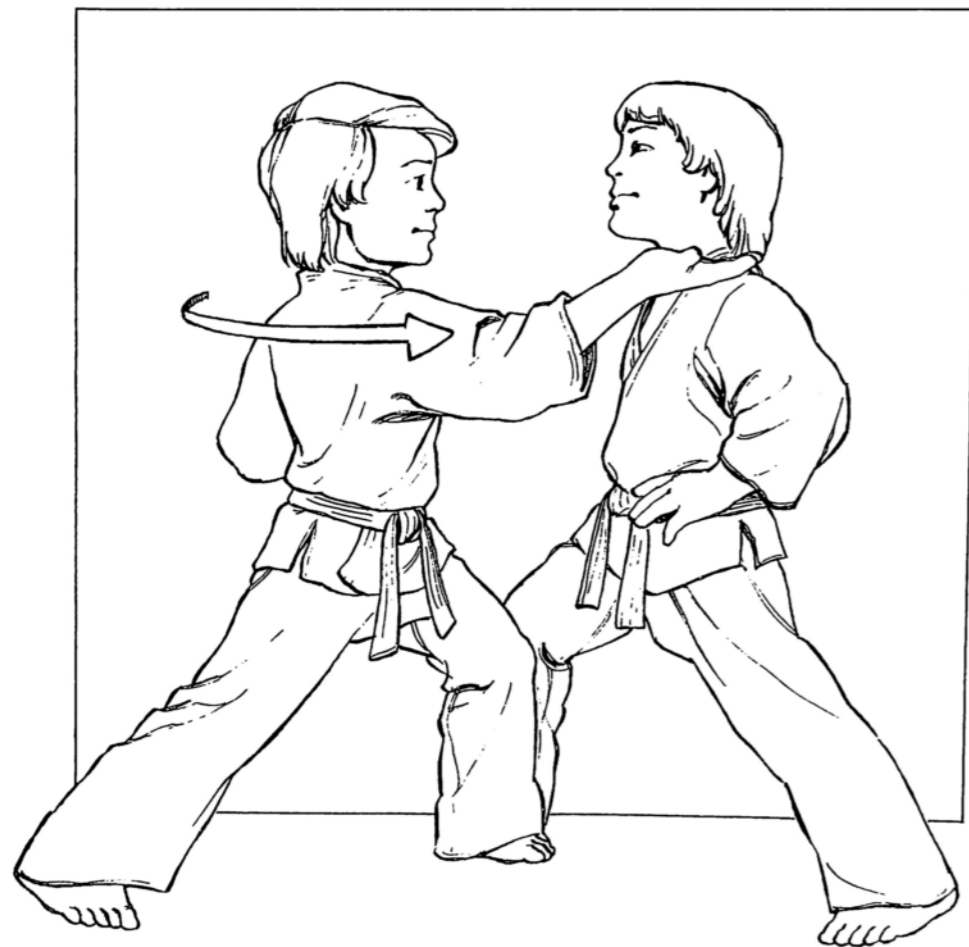


2. *Inside strike*

the point of focus for both strikes is the edge of the hand, by the wrist.

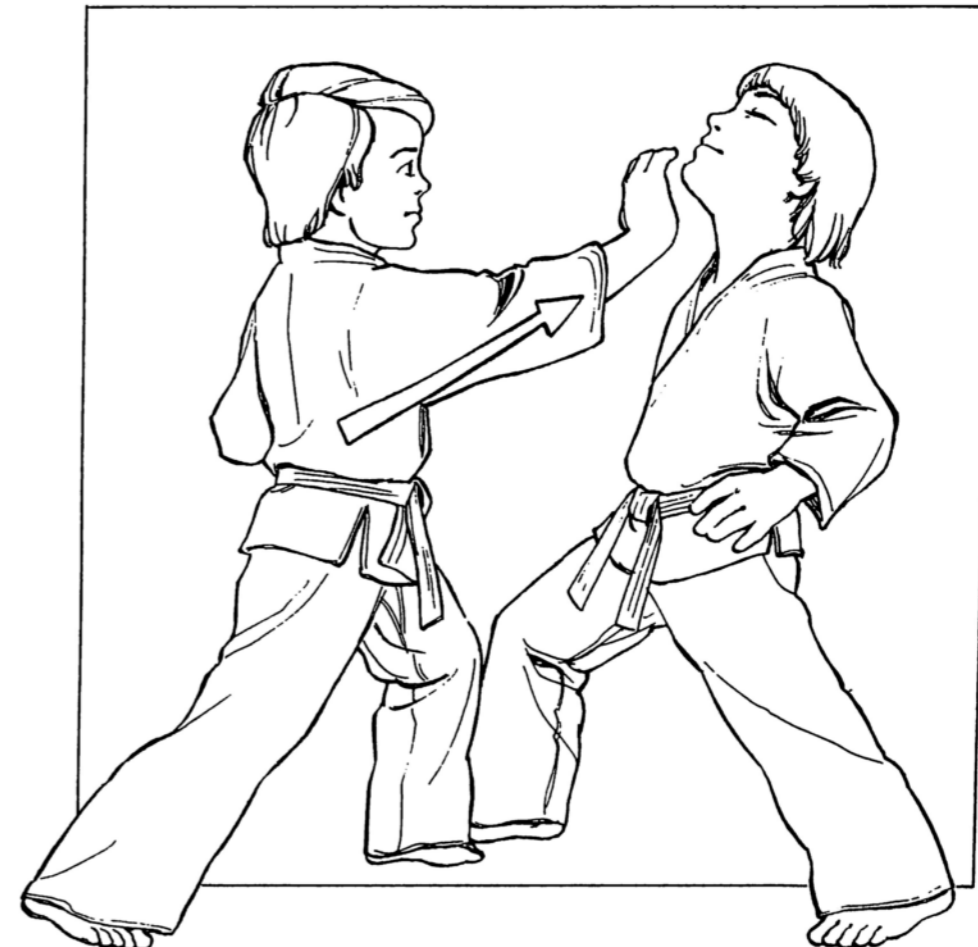
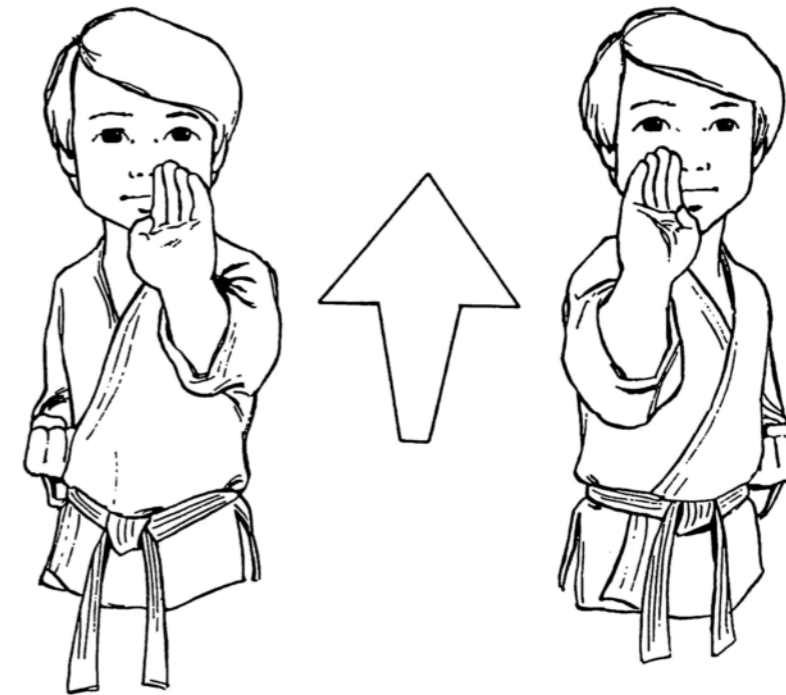


3. Shuto (Knife-hand strike) a. Outside strike



4. Taisho (Palm-heel strike)

Deliver straight from the hip. Point of focus: the heel of the palm.



Basic Kicks

Kicking techniques are by no means the most important part of Karate, but they are certainly the most difficult. Since we have only two legs, we must balance on one as we deliver with the other. It is therefore crucial to observe a good balance: keep the supporting foot flat on the floor at all times; keep the supporting leg slightly bent for spring action; and keep the body weight directly on top of the supporting leg.

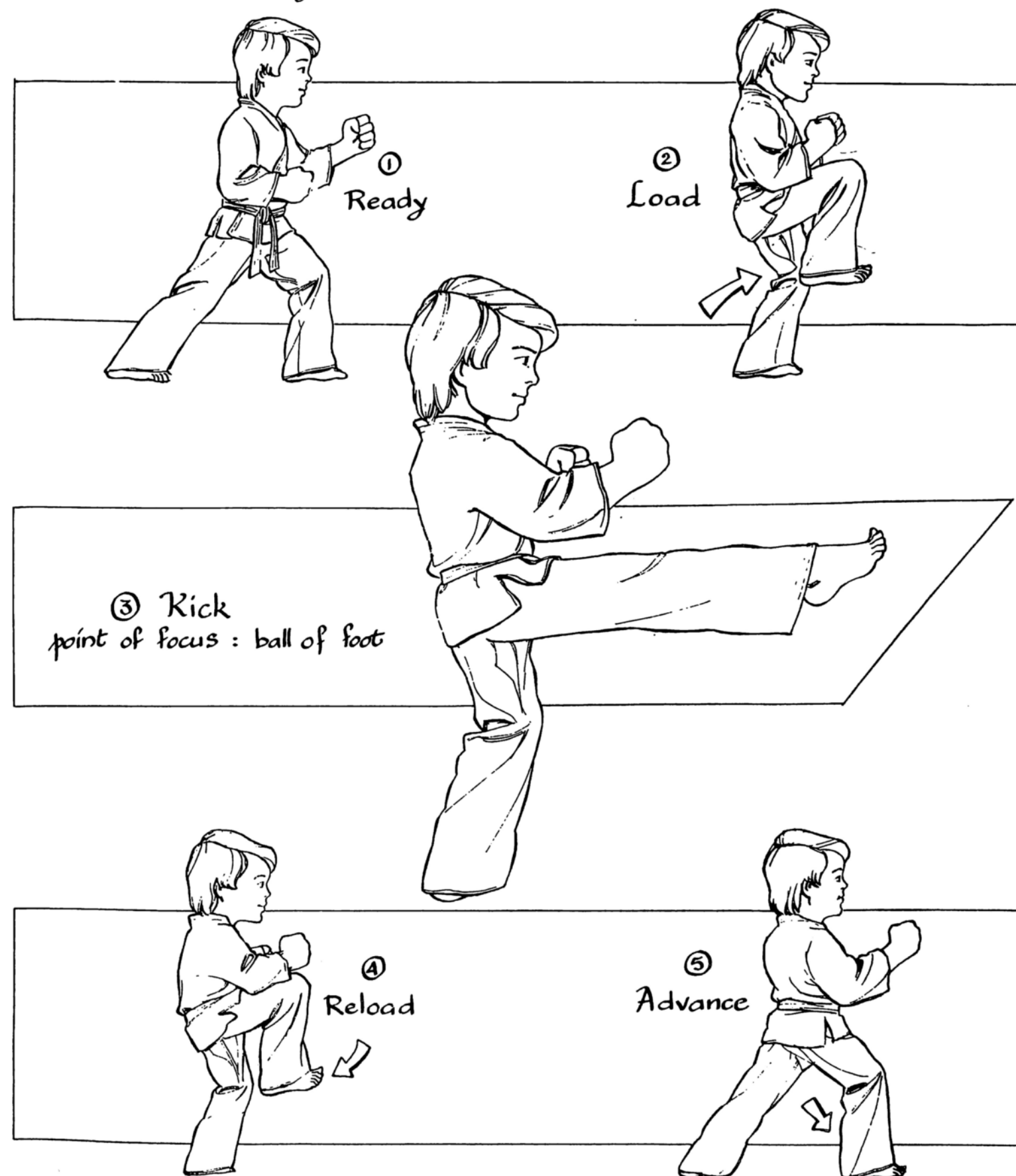
The execution of any kick can be broken down into three components: one, loading (raising the kicking leg, using the knee for aiming); two, delivering (thrusting the foot out along the line of attack); and three, re-loading (returning the leg to the original loading position).

If you can perform each kick in slow motion, holding each position for a few seconds, it would be most beneficial to a good understanding of the technique.

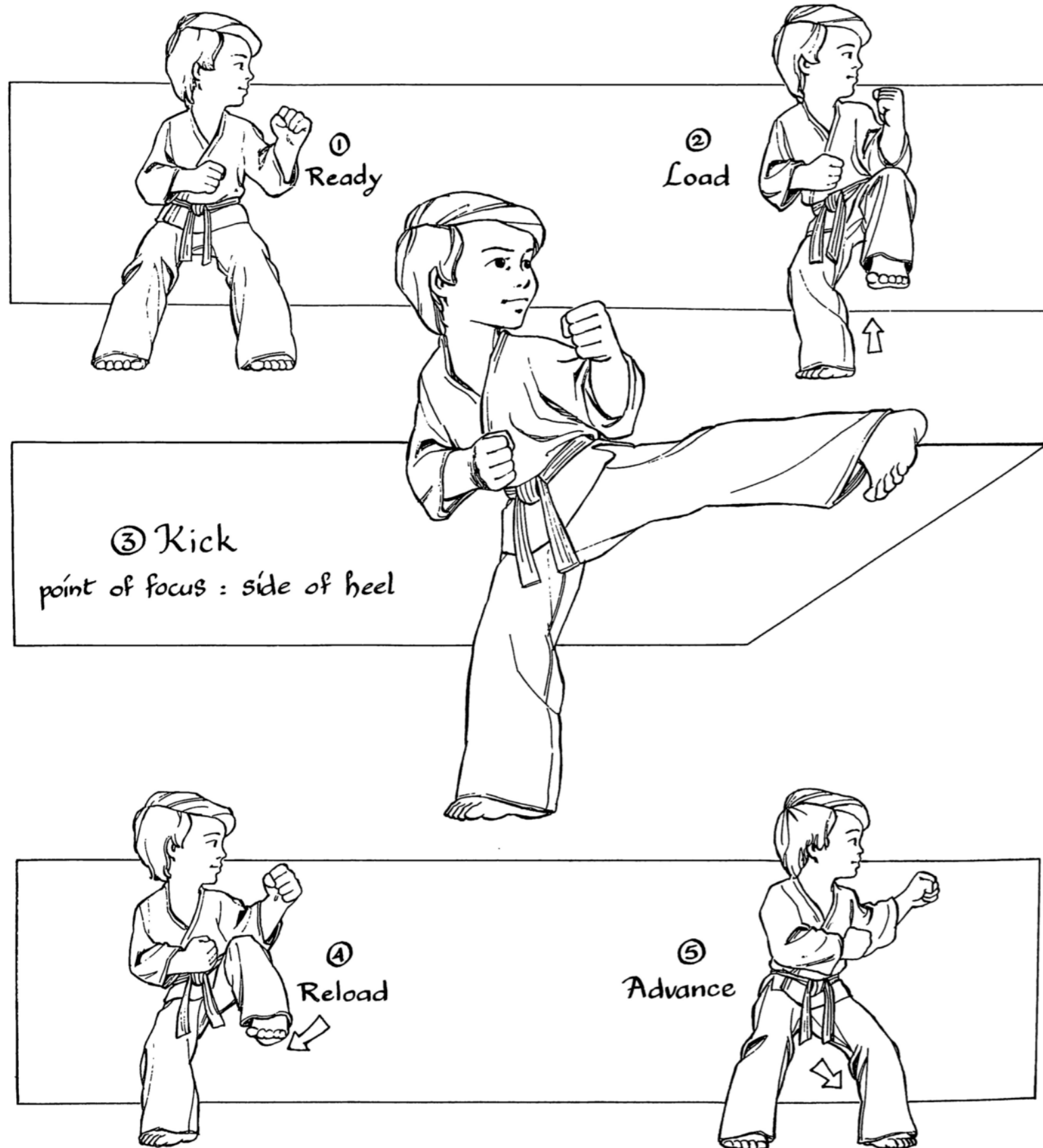
Start out kicking at hip level, alternating sides; and never forget: breathe out as you execute the action, always.

V. Basic kicks

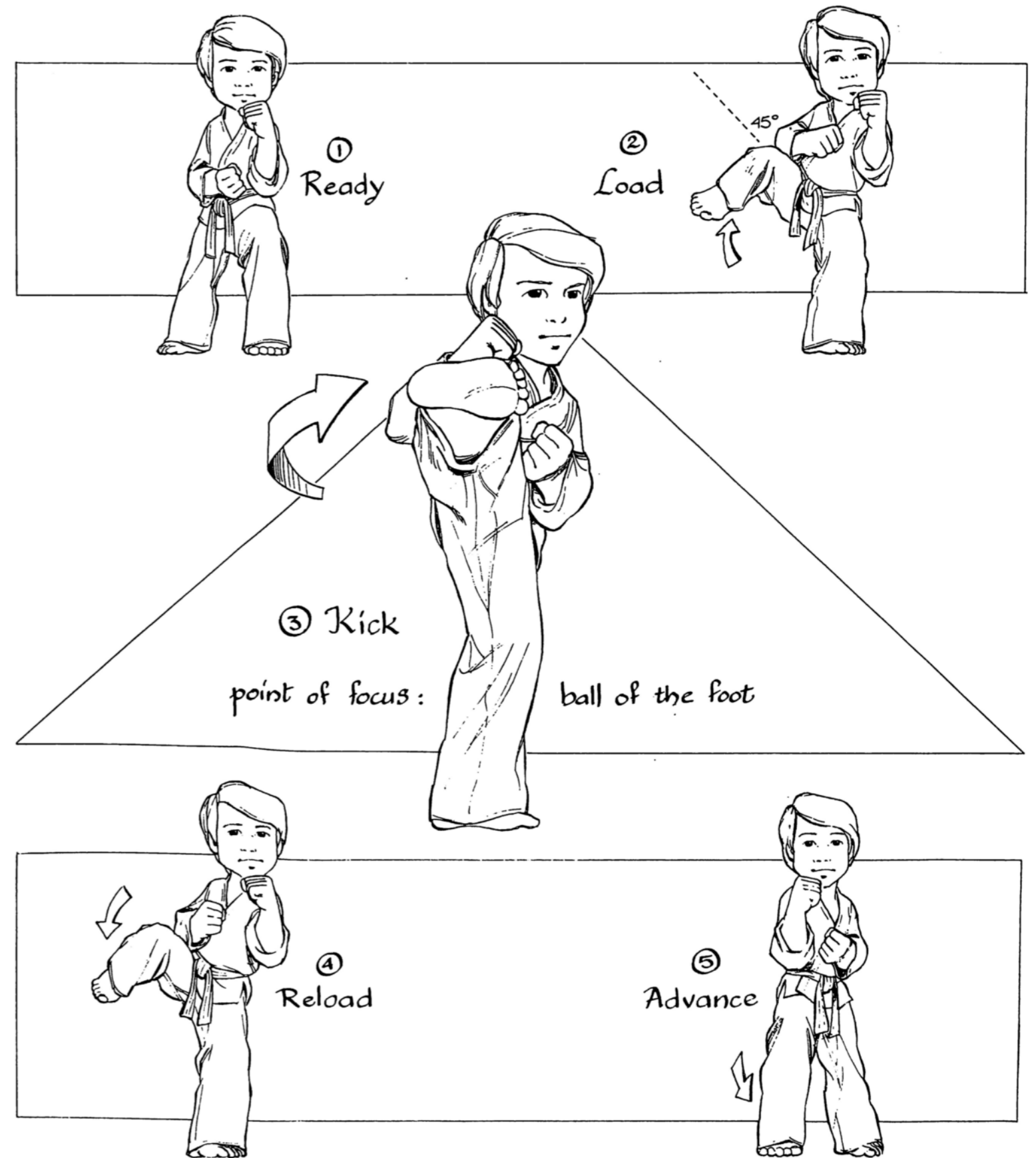
1. Mae geri (Front kick)



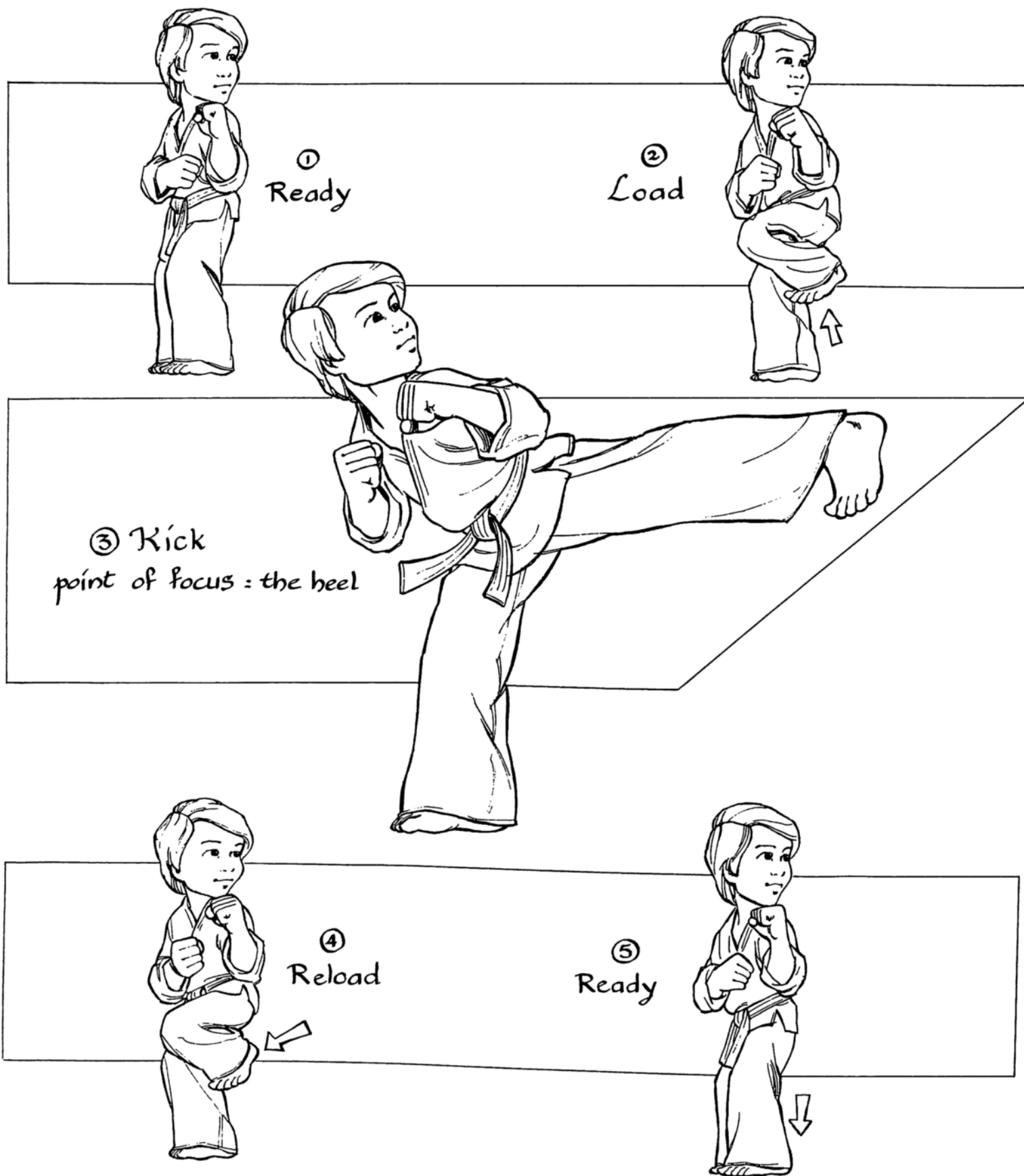
2. Yoko geri (Side kick)



3. Mawashi geri (Roundhouse kick)



4. Ushiro geri (Back kick)



Conclusion

In closing, I would like to remind you that the techniques reviewed in this volume are basic ones and are common to most styles of Karate.

Proper execution and attention to detail are the bases of good form. Good Karate means good understanding of the basics, from which more advanced material can later be shaped.

Our aim is not so much to become masters as to become better students.

