

**ASK Manual for Junior Karate Students**

# **KARATE BASICS**



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### **Techniques**

*Descriptions of some techniques follow. Note that not all of the techniques required for belt advancement are listed.*

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## **A Note to Parents**

Your involvement in the program will help sustain your child's interest and enthusiasm. As a parent you can help in many ways. Ensuring your child attends class regularly and arrives promptly helps your child feel involved in the group. Encouraging your child to practice by offering a target such as your hand or pillow for techniques (you can purchase a striking mitt) and noting completed practices on a practice sheet gives a sense of accomplishment. Reading this manual can help you help your child with his/her form and answer questions that might arise.

## **Introduction**

This manual is an aid for classroom instruction, not a replacement. Form descriptions and techniques for practice all flow from what the student is taught in the classroom. The descriptions are intended to be thorough so that with periodic review, the student can work on improving more than just the basic technique.

## **Practice**

Since the most important part of Karate is conditioning, practicing the techniques outside the classroom is essential. Classroom instruction teaches the technique and prepares for sparring (the sport part of Karate that uses the techniques in a light way {tapping} to score points). To improve these techniques, the student must condition the necessary muscles for balance and speed. Practicing the techniques slowly, almost in slow motion (called Slow with Good Form on the practice sheet), lets the student think about the form: using the correct hand or foot, looking in the correct direction, proper cover to avoid counter-strikes, etc. Practicing the techniques at "normal" speed with the objective of "tapping" the target (Quick Snap with Light Contact) improves accuracy, balance, speed, and strength.

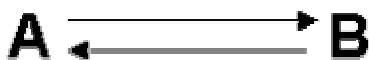
You can purchase Striking Mitts from your instructor for practice at home. The mitts give the student a target for the techniques and reduce the chance of injury. Note that even though the mitts provide a great deal of padding, it is still important to provide an appropriate target for the technique being practiced (e.g. a side facing target for a Roundhouse Kick and a front facing target for a Punch).

Regular practice can dramatically improve a child's form and satisfaction with his/her performance in class.

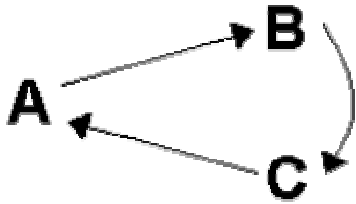
## **Technique**

Almost all Karate techniques fall into three categories: Straight Line, Hooking, and Half Circle.

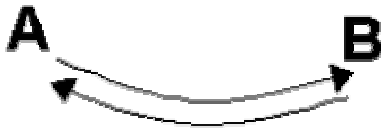
**A Straight Line technique** starts at point "A", goes straight to point "B", then returns (like a boxer's jab).



A **Hooking technique** starts at point "A", moves straight out to point "B", hooks around to point "C", then returns to point A (like a boxer's hook punch).



A **Half Circle technique** starts at point "A", swings around to point "B", then swings back (like the door knob on a door).



## **Karate Basics**

### **Fighting Stance**

#### **Description:**

The fighting stance begins every karate technique without exception. The body is completely sideways to your opponent; visualize an opponent when practicing. A left-hand fighting stance is with the left foot back and a right-fighting stance is with the right foot back. We call the hand closest to your opponent the "lead" hand and foot, and the hand and foot away from your opponent the "back" hand and foot. This is important to remember when practicing techniques like the Lead Ridge Hand Strike or the Back Ridge Hand Strike. Your feet should be double shoulder-width apart and the knees slightly bent. Your lead hand should be in a fist and placed on the knot of your belt. Your back hand should be in a fist and on your ear. It is important to have a good fighting stance in order to perform good techniques.

#### **Common Errors**

- Wrong hand down (especially when changing left and right stances) - your lead hand should be down - think about protecting yourself and where your opponent often is (often imaginary in the classroom).
- Body not aligned sideways to your opponent - when your body is facing square to the opponent, you have many more targets from them to hit.
- Not looking at your opponent (especially when practicing and no opponent is there) - ALWAYS keep your eyes trained on your opponent (to the front).
- Feet not wide enough apart - should be double shoulder width apart (about two feet for most kids)
- Elbows apart and not together exposing the chest area to attack.

### **Practice**

On the floor put two tape marks that represent the proper width for your feet (usually 18" - 20"). Practice a couple of the techniques from both stances and watch that your feet return to the tape marks when the technique is complete.

### **Slide-Up**

#### **Description**

Since it is understood that your opponent is more than an arm length away from you, most American Society of Karate (ASK) techniques begin with sliding the back foot to the lead foot. Punching and striking techniques then follow with stepping the lead foot forward in order to perform the technique within reach of your opponent. Because your legs have greater extension than your arms, kicking techniques do not require the additional forward step. After completing the technique, bring your lead foot back to beside your back foot and step your back foot to its original position from where the fighting stance started.

#### **Common Errors**

- Forgetting to Slide-Up - your techniques can only hit air if your opponent is too far away!
- Stepping too big - taking large steps takes too long and can make you lose your balance.
- Cross-stepping - bringing your back foot past your lead foot which often leads to tripping or loss of balance.

### **Pivot**

#### **Description**

Several techniques employ a "pivot" of your front or back foot. This means that the heel of the foot is raised while the ball of the foot stays on the floor and the foot is turned on the ball of your foot. A typical pivot will turn the foot 90 or 180 degrees of rotation.

## **TECHNIQUES**

**\*\* WHITE BELT \*\***

### **Back Fist Strike (Half Circle)**

#### **Description**

The Back Fist Strike is effective to the side and back of the head. The name "Back Fist" refers to the part of the hand with which you strike: the back side lead fist. Slide-up, step your lead foot forward, and raise your lead fist to your chin with your lead elbow up and forward.

Without moving your elbow, swing your forearm around and strike at the head level with the back side of your lead fist. Bring it back quickly and move back into your fighting stance as you step back into your original position.

#### **Common Errors**

- Punch used instead of swing motion - this technique is intended to be a very quick strike to the side of the head.
- Striking Hand is not in the proper position - while it is tempting to use the side of the fist, the back of the fist allows the arm the greatest extension - this is a technique for speed, not power.
- Swinging whole arm instead of just from the elbow.

### **Side Kick (Straight Line)**

#### **Description**

The side kick is a very powerful kick that is effective along full front and side of the opponent. Slide your back leg up to your lead leg, raise your lead leg, pull your toes back, then push your foot straight out at your opponent. Your foot should be sideways (parallel to the ground), kicking with the heel. Quickly bring your foot back and down and return to your fighting.

#### **Common Errors**

- Kick not pushed straight out but swings around.
- Foot is not horizontal - this makes it difficult to land the kick with the heel of your foot which is where the power is focused.
- Kicking with your toes or the ball of your foot.

### **Roundhouse Kick (Half Circle)**

#### **Description**

The Roundhouse Kick is probably the most effective tournament point scoring kick. Slide-up, raise your knee toward your opponent with your foot back and toes pointing down. Move your foot in a half-circle, parallel to the floor, around your knee and kick using the top part of your foot or the instep. Quickly bring your foot back and down and step back into your fighting stance.

### **Common Errors**

- Toes not curled down - this results in kicking directly on your toes, painful at best, might break a toe at worst.
- Kicking with a stiff leg and not using a Quick Snap.
- Kick swinging up like a front kick - raise knee first then kick.

## **Punch (Straight Line)**

### **Description**

The Punch is effective in the head, chest, and abdomen. Slide-Up and Step in turning your upper body to face your opponent, bring your lead hand up to "double-cover" your face (i.e. both fists are at cheek level in front of your face and your elbows are down), then punch forward with your back hand. Snap your hand back then, as you move back into your fighting stance, your lead hand drops back down, slide your lead foot back to your back foot and step your back foot back to your original position.

### **Common Errors**

- Punching with the lead hand - the hand that is the back hand in the fighting stance is the hand used to execute the punch.
- Forgetting to double cover - failing to double-cover leaves a sizable opening for a strike to your chest.
- Misjudging distance - missing or hitting too hard which is a foul in sparring.

## **\*\* YELLOW BELT \*\***

## **Knife Hand Strike (Half Circle)**

### **Description**

This technique is the same as the Back Fist Strike except the hand position is the Knife Hand. Slide-up, step forward, and bring your lead elbow up and forward; your lead hand should be flat and stiff and positioned at your chin. Swing your forearm in a half circle around your elbow and strike at the head or neck level with the knife edge of your lead hand. Snap your lead hand back and down and return to your fighting stance.

### **Common Errors**

- Fingers apart, not tight together.
- Thumb is not folded under fingers.
- Full arm swings instead of just from elbow.

## **Front Kick (Straight Line)**

### **Description**

The Front Kick is a very powerful kick and a good counter to an offensive advance from your opponent. From the fighting stance, without displacing your feet, twist your body to the front (your back foot should still be behind you and your lead knee should be bent). Move weight onto your lead leg and bring your back foot up by your lead knee with your toes pointed up, then kick forward from the knee. Your kick should strike on the ball of your foot. Quickly bring your leg back down and return to your fighting stance.

### **Common Errors**

- Knee not raised high enough - turns your kick into a stiff leg swinging kick which typically means kicking directly onto your toes.
- Kicking with toes or instep.
- Not pivoting to the front and trying to perform kick while standing sideways.

## **Back Ridge Hand Strike (Half Circle)**

### **Description**

The Back Ridge Hand Strike is similar to the Punch except that back hand uses a swinging motion with a Ridge Hand. This technique is effective to the head. Slide-up, step forward, and while turning your upper body to face your opponent, bring your lead hand up to "double cover" your face (i.e. both fists are at cheek level in front of your face and your elbows are down). Then move your back hand out to the side, form a Ridge Hand, and swing it out and around toward your opponent. Bring it back quickly while still double covering, then move back into your fighting stance as you step back into your original position.

### **Common Errors**

- Thumb out and fingers not together
- Forgetting to double cover - failing to double cover leaves a sizable opening for a strike to your chest
- Back Ridge Hand stops with a straight arm at head level and not back around to the chest

**\*\* ORANGE BELT \*\***

## **Front Ridge Hand Strike (Hooking)**

### **Description**

The Lead Ridge Hand strike maximizes your reach. Slide-up, step forward, and shoot your lead hand (in the Ridge Hand form) forward and to your opponent's stomach level but also a little to the back, then sweep across the entire position of your opponent. As your hand comes across your opponent pivot on your lead foot so that your heel points toward your opponent. Your lead hand finishes the sweep and comes back to your chest. Step back into your original position and return to your fighting stance.



### **Common Errors**

- Thrusting your hand directly at your opponent rather than to the side - does not allow for a full sweep, a good possibility of injury if you hit your opponent during the thrust.
- Not pivoting your body - pivoting your body provides added protection and power.
- Striking Hand is not in proper position - forgetting to tuck the thumb under your hand can be a painful lesson.

### **Hook Kick (Hooking)**

#### **Description**

The Hook Kick is an excellent kick to use in sparring because it is difficult to block and can be used to reach around blocks. Slide up, kick a side kick a little to your front then point your foot and toes down. Bend your leg below the knee around and strike with the bottom of the foot. (You can almost think of it as a backwards Roundhouse Kick.) Bring your leg back and down then step back into your fighting stance.

#### **Common Errors**

- Hook too small - the leg should be almost fully extended before hooking back in order to be effective
- Kicking with a stiff leg or swing the whole leg - kick is done from the knee down.

### **Hook Kick/Roundhouse Kick Combination (Hook and Half Circle)**

#### **Description**

You can combine techniques to make your attack many directions and present your opponents with a challenge in blocking. An especially effective combination is the Hook Kick/Roundhouse Kick combination since it attacks from both sides and has good reach. Slide up, perform a Hook Kick, then before your leg goes back down, perform a Roundhouse Kick. Bring your leg back down and step into your fighting stance.

#### **Common Errors**

- Two kicks are not distinct - often the two kicks look like two Roundhouse Kicks.
- Knee drops between kicks - should remain fixed in one place for both kicks

## **\*\* GREEN BELT \*\***

### **Spinning Back Kick (Half Circle)**

#### **Description**

The Spinning Back Kick is one of the more difficult kicks to learn and so is taught early to allow more practice. The kick is powerful and effective from the chest to the abdomen (and lower if not sparring), and is deceptive in that it turns into an attack while performing what appears to be solely defensive technique. From the fighting stance, slide your back foot of your lead foot and turn your body so that your back is to your opponent. Quickly turn your head around so that you can see your opponent over your back shoulder, bend over putting your arms out straight and down for balance and lift your back leg into your chest. Shoot your back leg out with your toes pointed down kicking with your heel. Snap your foot back, and turn your body back into your original fighting stance.

#### **Common Errors**

- Turning the wrong way - the thumb on your back hand points the direction in which you need to turn
- Losing visual contact - this is the most common and serious problem with this technique - you should always watch your opponent and watch where you are kicking
- Not bending over during the kick - this cramps the kick keeping it from reaching full height
- Foot not positioned with toes pointing down - this generally indicates an insufficient bend in your upper body
- Kicking with your toes rather than your heel

### **Jump Front Kick (Half Circle)**

#### **Description**

The Jump Front Kick is such a powerful and difficult to control kick that students are encouraged not to use it in sparring. It is however, one of the basics in Karate. Like in the Front Kick, twist your body in the fighting stance to the front, lift the back leg and knee up as if you were going to do a Front Kick; but instead, use that leg as a "trigger" or counter-balance to jump and execute a Front Kick with your lead leg. When both legs land, step your back foot back and reestablish your fighting stance.

#### **Common Errors**

- Kicking with the wrong leg - with the Jump Front Kick you use the lead leg.
- Losing your balance - if the "trigger" is done properly then balance should be maintained.
- Bring back foot up to lead foot and jumping from both feet rather than using the back foot for lift as you jump from your lead foot.

**\*\* BLUE BELT \*\***

**Jab (Straight Line)**

**Description**

The Jab is quick and especially effective to the head. Slide-up and step in, raise your lead fist to your head and jab directly at your opponent. Quickly bring your arm back, slide back, and return to your fighting stance.

**Common Errors**

- Jab is executed with the outside of the fist; the striking area should be your knuckles
- Elbow is up instead of down by your side - typically resulting in a Back Fist
- Upper body twist while striking - body should be still, only lead arm moves

**Jump Side Kick (Straight Line)**

**Description**

The Jump Side Kick is such a powerful and hard to control kick that students are encouraged not to use it in sparring. It is, however, one of the basic kicks in Karate. In order to get sufficient power to perform the jump, you need to start your stance wider than normal. Slide - up, jump straight up as high as you can, perform a Side Kick with your lead leg while you raise your back leg under you for balance. Step your back leg back and reform your fighting stance.

**Common Errors**

- Bending over and moving hands - throws you off balance and takes energy away from the kick
- Jump not high enough - not enough time to perform the kick and hard to balance on the landing
- Back foot not raised - can cause loss of balance
- Kick is done with a stiff leg rather than a snap

## **Jump Hook Kick (Hooking)**

### **Description**

The Jump Hook Kick is such a powerful and difficult to control kick that students are encouraged not to use it in sparring. It is, however, one of the basic kicks in Karate. In order to get sufficient power to perform the jump, you might want to start to start your stance wide than normal. Slide - up, jump straight up as high as you can, perform a Hook Kick with your lead leg while you raise your back leg under you for balance. Step your back leg back and reform your fighting stance.

### **Common Errors**

- See Common Errors of the Jump Side
- Kick done as a Side Kick and not a Hook Kick

## **Back Leg Crescent Kick (Hooking)**

### **Description**

The Crescent Kick is effective for a deceptive kick to the ribs but is a difficult technique to learn. From the fighting stance, twist your body to face your opponent as you would a Front Kick. Execute a Front Kick out a little in front of the target, then hook kick to the target with the bottom of the foot. Then bring your foot back to the raised position in which it started. When the kick completes, bring your back leg down in front and change to the opposite stance.

### **Common Errors**

- Not completing the twist - leaves you square to your opponent and an easy target
- Not covering enough distance with the kick
- Not forming the correct fighting stance after completion

### **Practice Note**

Practice this move from both stances. One method to help you place the kick is to hold your lead hand straight out, palm sideways, and kick your palm with your Crescent Kick.

## **\*\* ADVANCED BLUE BELT \*\***

### **Hook Punch (Hooking)**

#### **Description**

The Hook Punch is a powerful punch and especially effective in close quarters such as when mixed up with an opponent in sparring. Slide-up and step in; drop your lead fist and a little behind you with your arm bent about a 90 degree angle. Then pivot your lead foot that results in a hooking motion and a side punch to the ribs. Then return to the fighting stance.

#### **Common Errors**

- Punching with the wrong hand - done with lead hand
- Incorrect distance - attempting the punch from too great a distance means losing the hook
- No pivot on lead foot
- Turning too much and losing eye contact

### **Spinning Back Fist (Half Circle)**

#### **Description**

The Spinning Back Fist provides a rapid change of attack that can confuse the opponent. From the fighting stance, pivot your front foot and spin a full half circle to your back (follow your back hand around) and reestablish the opposite stance (what was your back leg is now your lead leg). Perform a Back Fist Strike, shift your balance onto what is now your back leg, spin a full half circle to the front (opposite clock direction from your first spin), and reestablish your original stance.

#### **Common Errors**

- Spinning the wrong way - follow your back thumb around for the first spin then the opposite direction to spin back
- Not spinning around enough
- Losing your balance with the spin - this problem is resolved only with enough practice