

Intermediate positions in Taekwon-Do

This thesis has been submitted as a website.

Please visit <http://sutherland.kiwi/tkd>

There is a copy of the text from the website below.

Most techniques in Taekwon Do have an intermediate or loading position, to correctly perform a technique with power and precision these intermediate positions are just as important as the finishing position of a technique. Excluding the intermediate position from a technique will have many detrimental effects on a technique and the students development. While the intermediate position is of great importance to a technique, the Taekwon Do encyclopaedia provides very little information about intermediate positions. This website will demonstrate the importance, common mistakes and specific examples of intermediate positions. It is important to note that the intermediate positions on this web site are specifically related to techniques performed in patterns and may not be applicable in sparring or destruction. Some techniques can be performed slightly differently due to stances or the position of the reaction hand, unless stated otherwise the intermediate positions detailed here are for the most common variation of the technique.

Common Mistakes

Pausing

Once a technique has started moving, it should not stop until it has reached its final destination. When beginning students are learning new techniques – in particular new blocks that have a cross for their intermediate position – they have a tendency to hold their intermediate position before continuing with the technique, this is a good way to ensure that they are performing the correct intermediate position. Once a student is confident with the intermediate position this pause needs to be removed and instead the student should pass through the intermediate position without stopping the momentum of the technique.

Too close to the body



When the intermediate position of a hand technique is performed too close to the body, chest and back muscles become tense and natural movement can become restricted. When this happens, there are two main consequences.

1. The intended path of the technique changes
2. Speed and acceleration are reduced, limiting the power

These consequences result in a technique that is much less effective than when performed correctly or in some cases the technique may become ineffective.

Incorrect Positioning

Performing the intermediate position of a technique at an incorrect height or vertical position will change the path that the attacking or blocking tool travels as the technique is performed, depending on the technique that may result in an ineffective technique.

Incorrect Foot Shaping

When performing a foot technique, the foot should be correctly shaped by the time the intermediate position is reached. Once the intermediate position has been reached the foot position should be locked and not moving.

With the foot locked into its correct shape at the intermediate position it is easier for the student to focus on the correct delivery of the technique. If the ankle is not locked into the correct position at the intermediate position there is a risk of the foot not getting into its correct position before completing the technique, this could result in less power or the rolling / twisting of the ankle at the moment of impact.

Not relaxed

When performing any technique, a student should be relaxed throughout the entire movement tensing only at the end of the technique. Shoulders should be relaxed and with few exceptions the hands should be forming lightly clenched fists. Elbows should also be relaxed in a natural position, close to the body. Students who are not relaxed at the intermediate position will not be able to generate as much speed and therefore power in their techniques.

Conducting the Orchestra

When performing a hand technique, students will often over exaggerate the movement of the hands prior to the intermediate position, these big excessive movements can look similar to those of a conductor leading an orchestra.

One of the most common techniques where this will be noticed is Guarding Block, the students hands will drop down to the waist before moving to the intermediate position. This is wasted motion that will result in the technique taking longer to perform. When moving between techniques the hands should travel directly to the

next intermediate position or both hands should come to a relaxed position in front of the body at chest height.

Helpful Hints

What cross should I be using?

Sometimes it can be difficult for beginners to figure out which of the 3 different crosses to use for a certain technique. One way a student can figure out which cross to use is to think of the rotation of the wrists. Both hands have to rotate from the intermediate position to the final position of the technique.

1. Get the student to make the final position of the technique.
2. Bring both hands in front of the chest making sure the wrists have not rotated yet.
3. Rotate the wrists approximately 180°. The wrists will only be able to rotate this far in one direction. The wrists are now at the correct rotation for the cross.
4. Look at where the palms/hands are facing.
 1. If one palm is facing the student and the other palm is facing away use the '[Watch Faces](#)' cross with the hand that is facing the student crossing on top.
 2. If both palms are facing away use the '[Palms Away](#)' cross with the primary hand crossing underneath or furthest from the body.
 3. If both palms are facing towards the student use the 'Palms Towards' Cross with the primary hand crossing on top or closest to the body.

Below are examples of each type of cross demonstrating how the wrist rotation can help a student figure out which cross to use.

Forearm Low Block – Watch Faces

Technique

Hands In Front

Rotate Wrists

Cross



Inner Forearm Outward Block – Palms Away

Technique

Hands In Front

Rotate Wrists

Cross



Twin Forearm Block – Palms Towards

Technique

Hands In Front

Rotate Wrists

Cross



Which hand is the primary hand?

There are some techniques where it is not immediately obvious which hand is the primary hand. There are two ways to determine which hand is the primary hand.

1. Stance – Whatever leg is forward in the stance, the same hand will be the primary hand.
 1. Twin forearm block in right L-Stance. Left leg is forward therefore the left hand performing the outer forearm block is the primary hand and will be crossing on the inside using the '[Palms Facing](#)' cross.
 2. Outer forearm Wedging Block in Right Walking stance. Right leg is forward therefore the right hand is the primary hand and will be crossing on the inside using the '[Palms Facing](#)' cross.
2. Movement – If unable to determine the primary hand by stance, it is possible to identify the hand by which leg is the last leg to move during the technique.
 1. Movement 1 in Juche – Move left foot to B, forming a sitting stance toward D while executing a parallel block with the inner forearm. The left leg is moving therefore the left hand is the primary hand and will be crossing on the outside using the '[Palms Away](#)' cross.

2. Movement 8 in Po-Eun – Execute a middle wedging block with the inner forearm while maintaining a sitting stance. The last leg to move was the right leg in movement #4 therefore the right hand is the primary hand and will be crossing on the outside using the '[Palms Away](#)' cross.
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Crossing

The intermediate position for many techniques involve the arms crossing at the wrists. While there are a large number of techniques with wrist crosses at the intermediate position, there are only 3 main crossing positions.

Every cross is performed with the hands forming a fist while remaining relaxed – no white knuckles. While the hands are forming a fist, I have found it easier to explain the cross by referencing the palms instead of the under fist.

Crossing positions have no formal name so I am referring to them in the way I was taught and continue to teach students.

Watch Faces



This is most likely the first wrist cross that a beginning student is taught as it is used in Saju Jirugi (Low forearm block) and Saju Makgi (Knifehand low block).

Imagine you are wearing 2 watches, one on each wrist. To perform this cross you are going to smash the 2 watch faces together. This is how this cross was explained to me over 15 years ago, I have not come across a better method of explaining this cross and as such still use this explanation with beginners today.

The blocking hand will be on top of the reaction hand **OR** the blocking hand will be on the inside, closer to the body than the reaction hand.

The palm of the blocking hand will be facing up **OR** towards the body.

The palm of the reaction hand will be facing down **OR** away from the body

This cross is used for both offensive and defensive techniques

As used in:

Outer forearm outward block

Knifehand side strike

Rising block – Forearm, knifehand

Note: This cross is only used when a single technique is being performed. ie no double or twin techniques will use this cross.

Palms Away



This cross is only performed for techniques that are either middle or high.

Both palms are facing away from the body.

The primary blocking hand will be positioned outside the reaction hand.

Wrists should never be lower than the elbows.

As used in:

Inner forearm outward block

Inner forearm wedging block

Backfist side strike

Palms Facing



Both palms are facing towards the body.

The primary blocking hand will be positioned inside the reaction hand.

Wrists should never be lower than the elbows.

This cross can be performed while executing a block with one hand and an attack with the other (Movement #28 in Toi-Gye).

As used in:

Outer forearm wedging block

Knifehand wedging block

Twin Block – Outer forearm, knifehand

Note: This cross is only used when both arms are being used to defend and / or attack.

Techniques

W-Shape Block – One Opponent



Purpose

Block a foot or hand technique aimed at the philtrum and other vital spots on the head that are above the philtrum.

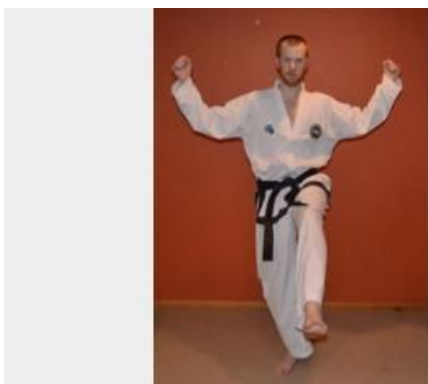
When using this block to defend against a single attack, the block is performed in Sitting, Parallel or Close stance.

When defending against one attacker, this block is performed in a stepping motion.

First Pattern - Toi-Gye (Red Stripe)

Cross: No

Intermediate Position



The body should be full facing towards the opponent. If performing the block with the left arm, the left leg is raised.

The knee of the raised leg should be lifted to waist height.

The knee of the raised leg is bent at an angle similar to that of the front leg in a walking stance

At the intermediate position, the arms are already in the final position of the block.

Outer Forearm Low Block



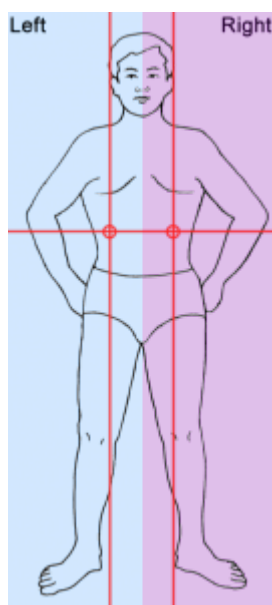
Purpose

Intercept an opponents attacking foot or hand directed against the lower abdomen or points below.

First Pattern - Saju Jirugi (White Belt)

Cross: [Watch Faces](#)

Intermediate Position



Hands cross at rib height on the opposite or rear chest line. For this block to be effective the arms must cross at a comfortable distance out from the body

Twin Forearm Block



Purpose

Block a simultaneous attack from the front and the side.

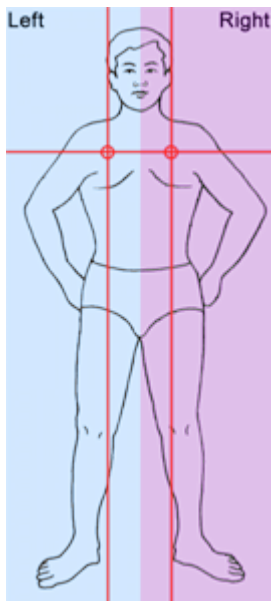
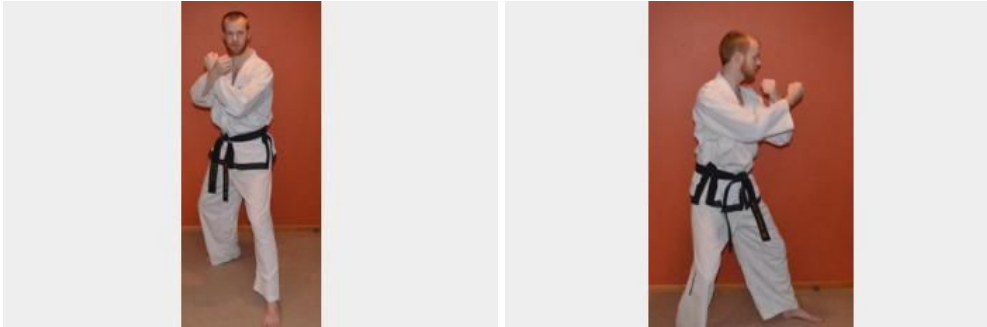
The side block however is the primary defence.

The side blocking forearm usually performs a middle block.

First Pattern - Dan-Gun

Cross: [Palms Facing](#)

Intermediate Position



Wrists cross on the front chest line at solar plexus height.

The cross should be performed away from the body so that angle of the arms at the elbow will be maintained throughout the technique.

Since the side block is the primary defense, that arm will be positioned on the inside of the rising block arm.

If the student does not cross on the front chest line, the blocking tools will not reach their target on the most efficient and effective line.

When performing this block, the left hand works as the reaction hand for the right hand and vice versa, if for example the left hand arrives at its

destination at a different time or arrives with reduced power then according to the theory of power and specifically reaction force, the power of the right hand is also reduced.

U-Shape Block



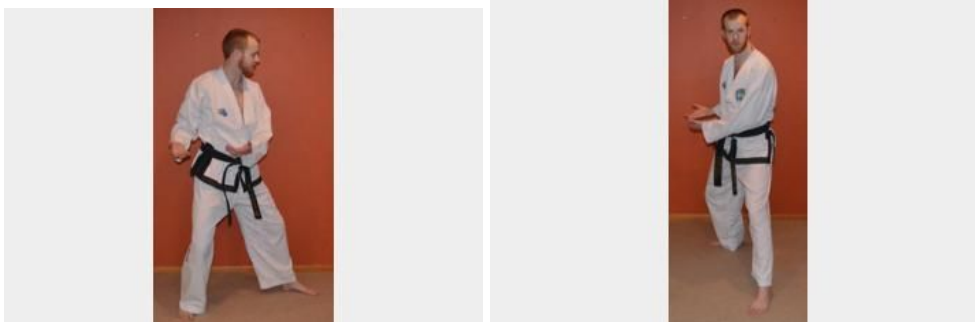
Purpose

Block either a pole or bayonet. This block is primarily performed in fixed and L stances. Keep both hands in a vertical line at the moment of the block. The lower elbow should be flush with the hip.

First Pattern - Yul-Gok (Blue Stripe)

Cross: No

Intermediate Position



Both hands are open in a relaxed position.

The palm of both hands should be facing up

The hand that will form the lower part of the U-Shape block should be positioned on the solar-plexus line.

The hand that will form the upper part of the block should be positioned at shoulder line of the rear shoulder.

Both hands should be positioned at waist height

Upset Fingertip Thrust



Purpose

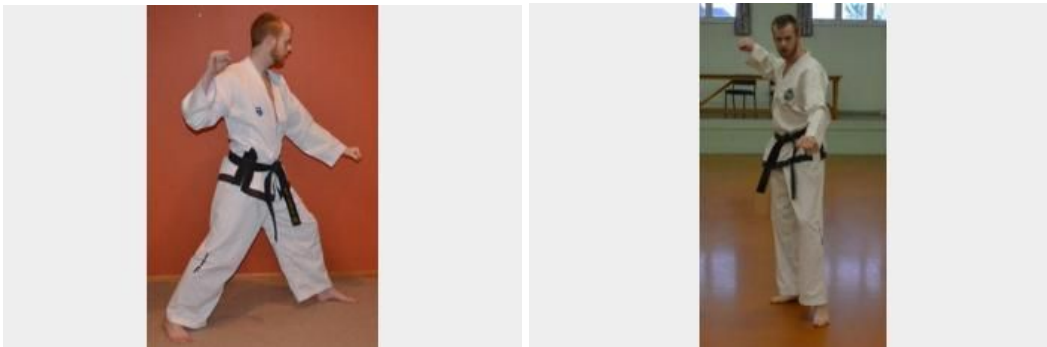
Attack the umbilicus or pubic region using the small attacking area of the fingertips.

Thrusting techniques are executed in a similar manner as a punch except they do not have to be drawn from the hip. A secondary target area is the armpit of the opponent.

First Pattern - Toi-Gye (Red Stripe)

Cross: No

Intermediate Position



Upper body is half facing, this allows for hip movement to increase the power of the technique.

Attacking hand loosely forms a fist.

Attacking hand is at jaw height outside the line of the rear shoulder.

Palm of attacking hand should be facing towards the opponent

Reaction hand is extended out in front of the body at waist height with the palm facing down.

Palm Hooking Block



Purpose

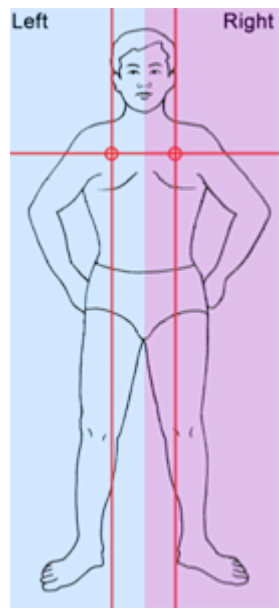
Block a straight attack, technique ends with the defender having grabbed the attackers forearm. It is also possible to use this technique against a straight kick such as a side piercing kick.

This block is most effective when blocking to the outside of the attackers arm. If the defender blocks to the inside of the attackers arm they are left open to further attacks.

First Pattern - Yul-Gok

Cross: [Watch Faces](#)

Intermediate Position



The wrists should cross at chest height on the opposite chest line.

At the intermediate position the blocking hand should be forming a relaxed fist with the blocking hand on top of the reaction hand. The intermediate position for this technique is unique, the cross position is different to the 3 cross positions as described [here](#). The cross is similar to the [Watch Faces cross](#) however the positioning of the blocking hand is different.

The blocking hand remains on top of the other hand.

The side fist of the blocking hand will be facing down **OR** away from the body.

The palm of the reaction hand will be facing down **OR** away from the body

Knifehand Side Strike



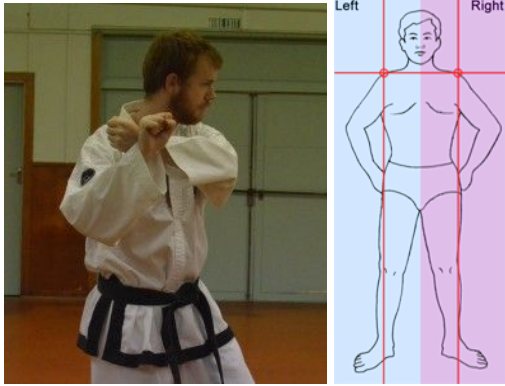
Purpose

Attack an opponent who is to the attackers side. If the body becomes half facing or full facing at the moment of impact it is considered a side strike. The solar plexus, neck, temple and philtrum are the main targets, this strike is only ever performed at middle height.

First Pattern - Dan-Gun

Cross: [Watch Faces](#)

Intermediate Position



The wrists should cross at shoulder height on opposite shoulder line.

At the intermediate position the attacking hand should be forming a relaxed fist with the striking hand on top of the reaction hand.

The knifehand should travel horizontally towards the target. If the cross is performed at a height other than shoulder height this is not possible.

Forearm Rising Block



Purpose

Defend against a downward strike to the forehead or skull with either a club, pole or hand. Only the outer forearm is used for blocking.

Always maintain a full facing posture towards the opponent at the moment of the block.

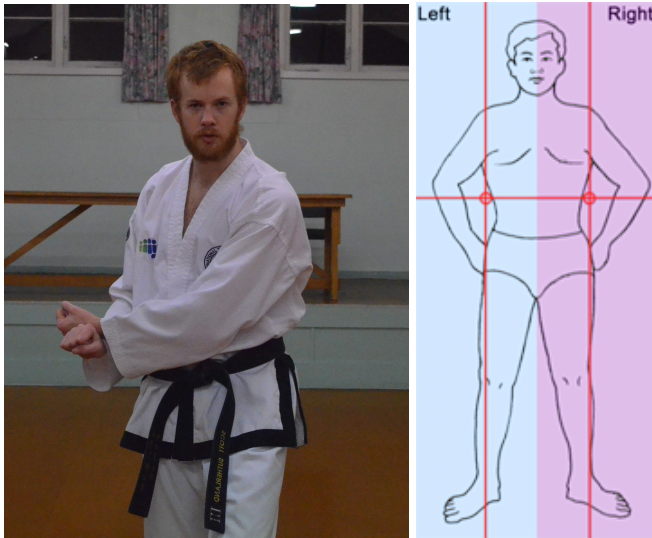
Basic Principles:

1. The fist should be slightly higher than the elbow.
2. The distance between the inner forearm and the forehead is about 7cm with the elbow bent at a 45 degree angle.
3. The inner forearm reaches the same level as the forehead

First Pattern - Dan-Gun

Cross: [Watch Faces](#)

Intermediate Position



Wrists cross on shoulder line, the height of the cross is normally explained as being at rib height. Avoid crossing too close to the body as this will negate the effectiveness of the reaction hand due to the decreased distance it can travel between the intermediate position and the hips.

Forearm rising blocks are deflecting blocks, as such the forearm should not travel perpendicular to the attack. If the cross is not performed at the opposite chest line then the forearm will be travelling directly upward perpendicular to the downward travelling attack.

Rising block is a full facing block however at the point of the intermediate position the body should be half facing, this will allow for hip movement to improve the effectiveness of the technique.

Front Snap Kick



Purpose

This technique is designed to attack an opponent in the front. The face, solar plexus, abdomen, scrotum, armpit and floating ribs are the target.

The ball of the foot is the primary attacking tool however the kick can also be performed using the instep, toes and knee.

Since the ball of the foot is the primary attacking tool, the intermediate position

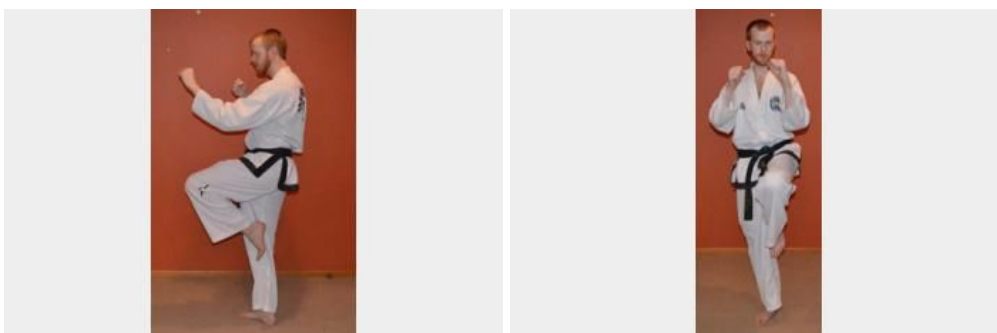
described below will be that of a front snap kick using the ball of the foot.

Front snap kicks can only be performed at middle or low height.

First Pattern - Do-San

Cross: No

Intermediate Position



The intermediate position for a front snap kick is at the point where the knee has reached its highest point, during the execution of the kick the knee will drop down from this point.

The knee should be bent and the lower leg retracted so that the foot is close to the grounded knee.

By the time the motion of the kick has reached the intermediate position, the foot should be correctly shaped, The foot should be pointing down with the toes pulled back

Forearm Guarding Block



Purpose

Frequently used as a ready posture in sparring, since one can position oneself in a half facing posture and protect the body completely with both hands.

Rules for a guarding block:

1. Keep the blocking tool half facing the target at the moment of blocking

2. Bring the opposite side fist in front of the chest 3

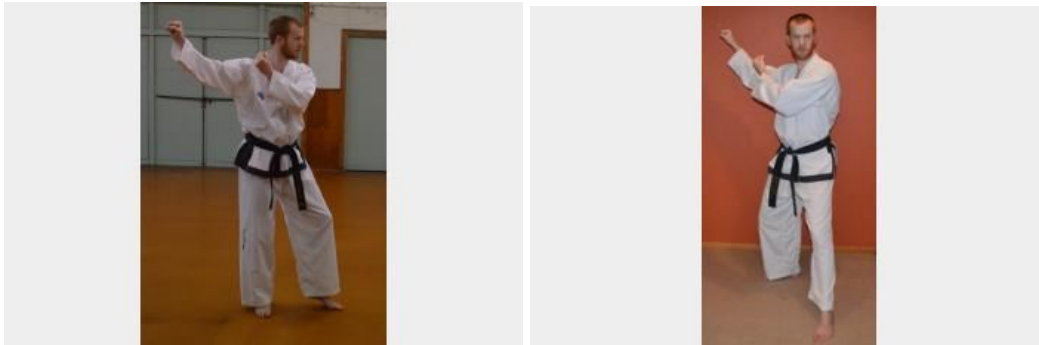
centimetres from the body. The guarding hands should be flexible enough to protect the whole body against an attack

3. Keep the body half facing the target at all times.

First Pattern - Dan-Gun

Cross: No

Intermediate Position



The front hand should be in line with the opposite shoulder at shoulder height with the palm facing up.

The rear hand should be away from the body on a line outside the rear shoulder with the palm facing down.

The rear hand should remain equidistant from the front hand throughout the technique and should reach a height in line with the top of the head.

The rear hand should be away from the body on a line outside the position of the front hand.

Backfist Side Strike



Purpose

The primary target for a backfist is the temple. The attacking tool creates a straight line with the center of the shoulders at the moment of impact.

First Pattern - D-San

Cross: [Palms Away](#)

Intermediate Position



Hands should always cross at shoulder height however the vertical position is dependent on the attackers stance.

The default vertical crossing position is the attackers opposite chest line.

When performing a backfist side strike from a sitting stance (Movement 24 of Choong-Moo) then the crossing position is the attackers Solar-Plexus line.

Note: Not all backfist side strikes have a cross position.

In movements 36 and 43 from Choi-Yong, the finger belly of the opposite hand comes to the side fist of the striking hand.

With the hands coming together in this manner it is not possible to perform a cross.

X-Fist Pressing Block



Purpose

Pressing blocks are only performed against low attacks. The block is aimed at the tibia of the attacking foot at the defenders lower abdomen.

First Pattern - Toi-Gye

Cross: No

Intermediate Position



Hands form lightly clenched fists with the palms facing up.

Each hand should be at shoulder height.

Each hand should be slightly outside the line of the shoulder.

Side Piercing Kick



Purpose

Attack an opponent at the flank. The footsword is the only attacking tool.

Targets are the temple, armpit, floating ribs and neck artery. The philtrum, chin and solar plexus are secondary targets.

Basic Principles:

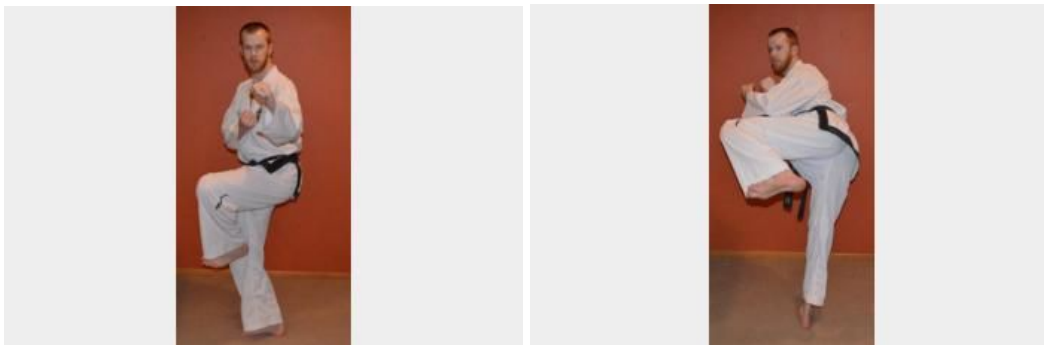
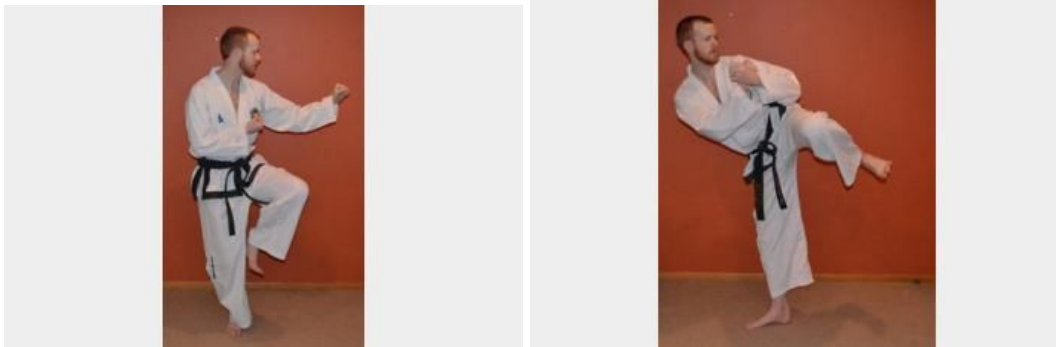
1. Footsword must reach the target in a straight line
2. Regardless of stance, the footsword must be brought to the inner knee joint of the stationary leg prior to delivering the kick.
3. Keep the kicking foot pointed slightly downwards, approximately 15 degrees below the horizontal. The grounded leg should point away from the kicking leg at the moment of impact.

4. To achieve greater height, lean the body away from the kick as far as possible while maintaining balance.
5. Perform a high punch over the kicking leg.

First Pattern - Won-Hyo

Cross: No

Intermediate Position



Note: Side piercing kick has two positions that can be considered intermediate positions. To execute this kick with maximum efficiency, the technique must flow through both positions.

Intermediate Position #1:

The first intermediate position of the side piercing kick is essentially bending ready stance A.

Grounded leg is slightly bent with the foot pointing 15 degrees inward (as with the rear foot of L-Stance)

Kicking leg is raised so that the foot is positioned beside the knee of the grounded leg.

The foot of the kicking leg should be horizontal to the ground. For the remainder of the technique the ankle should be locked in place.

The hands should be forming a loose guarding block at this stage of the technique. It is a common mistake for students to have their foot pointing downward when reaching this position.

Intermediate Position #2:

The foot of the grounded leg should be pointing away from the target, this helps to open up the hips so that the student can perform the kick correctly.

As the grounded foot points away, the hips rotate so that they are in a straight line towards the target.

The kicking leg rolls over so that the lower leg is horizontal to the ground, the knee retracts further away from the target.

When performing a side piercing kick the default action is to execute a punch out over top of the kicking leg. When performing this technique with the punch the hands should be forming a '[Palms Facing](#)' cross position at intermediate position #2 with the punching hand on the inside.

Knifehand W-Shape Block - Two Opponents

Purpose

Block a foot or hand technique aimed at the philtrum and other vital spots on the head that are above the philtrum.

When using this block to defend against a two attackers, the block is primarily performed in Sitting or walking stance but can also be performed in Parallel, Close, One Leg or X stance.

When performing this block from sitting stance against two opponents a sliding motion can be used.

First Pattern - Choi-Yong

Cross: [Palms Facing](#)

Intermediate Position

The body should be full facing, the attackers would be positioned to the sides.

Wrists cross on solar plexus line at shoulder height

Double Forearm Block

Purpose

Defend against an attack coming from the front. Inner forearm is the only possible blocking tool.

This block is always performed half facing.

Bring the second knuckle of the secondary hand to the elbow of the primary hand at the moment of impact. The second hand serves two purposes.

1. helps strengthen the technique making it one of the strongest forms of blocking
2. Can be quickly shifted into a low block while the primary hand is still blocking the initial attack

This technique can be performed in Walking, L, fixed or X stance

First Pattern - Yul-Gok

Cross: No

Intermediate Position

The front hand should be in line with the opposite shoulder at shoulder height with the palm facing down.

The rear hand should be away from the body on a line outside the rear shoulder with the palm facing down.

The rear hand should reach eye height.

The rear hand should be away from the body on a line outside the position of the front hand.