

Out-Fit Punching & Kicking Workshop 26 March 2011

Introduction

There are many forms of fighting arts, each with their own way of punching or kicking. Boxers punch with the front of the fist and do not kick. Thai boxers use punches along with kicks, knees, elbows and take downs. Karate practitioners allow punching with the back of the fist and use extensive kicking and knee strikes. Kung fu people often punch with a vertical fist using circular movements. Mixed martial arts fighters punch or kick with anything that is likely to do the most damage.

This workshop teaches principles primarily from a karate and boxing perspective.



Why bother learning to punch and kick correctly?

- Using the correct technique forces your whole body to work hard thereby burning more body fat.
- Using the correct technique allows you to work out at maximum output without the fear of injury.
- Using the correct technique will result in greater improvements in cardiovascular fitness.
- Using the correct technique will improve muscular endurance.
- Using the correct technique enables your partner to enjoy their workout experience more.

"I don't want to hit hard because I might hurt my partner"

Within reason, you must overcome this fear because it will damage both of your workouts. You back off because of your concern for your partner, then out of courtesy your partner also backs off and neither of you get a decent workout. To get results, it is important to use as much power and energy as you can muster. If you can still talk at the end of your round you didn't push yourself hard enough.

If your skill level or physical size is vastly different from your partner's then the strategy is as follows:

- start at about 75% of your maximum power output then ask your partner if that is OK for them
- if they are coping, gradually increase the power and monitor this by again asking your partner
- if your partner is not able to cope with your power, use SPEED of technique (instead of POWER) to increase your energy output

Making a bare knuckle fist

The best way to learn how to make a fist is to practice without gloves on. This will highlight any deficiencies in the fist and wrist alignment. The best way to practice the wrist and knuckle alignment is to first perform pushups on the knuckles as this forces correct alignment. You can then progress to punching a heavy bag or shield to check your technique.



Start with an open hand



Roll fingers tightly starting at the small finger



Lock the fist taking the thumb over the first two knuckles

Wrist alignment and the striking knuckles

Regardless of the type of punch being performed, you will be striking with the base knuckles of the index and middle fingers (the knuckles that join the fingers to the hand). There are NO exceptions to this rule.

Regardless of the type of punch being used, there will be a straight line at the wrist between the fist and forearm.



Fist position for a straight punch



Wrist alignment



Wrist alignment

The Stance

How you stand determines how well you punch or kick. It is your contact with the ground and is your means of adding power to your technique. Imagine yourself hanging from a harness in a tree without your feet contacting the ground. Any attempt to punch or kick something would be useless because the forces involved would just propel you backwards. Firm contact with the ground is your source of power.

From the front, your feet should be shoulder width apart. When viewed from the side, the distance between your feet (the length of your stance) should be determined by the distance taken with a comfortable step distance forward. Longer stances are more powerful but less mobile. Shorter stances are less powerful and less stable but are more mobile. We want a happy medium between the two.

Your hands must be held high at head level (often called "the guard") with the elbows tucked in and the front shoulder pulled across slightly to help protect the jaw. Your rear hand is planted beside the cheek and your forward "jab" hand is extended slightly. Your power hand (usually the right hand) is at the rear because you will generate more power from the rear of the body.



Hands protecting head - feet shoulder width apart



Length of stance



Keep it tight

Moving in the stance (the boxer's shuffle)

When moving in your stance, you perform a "shuffle." The feet NEVER cross in a walking fashion. The foot closest to the direction you wish to move always moves first then the other foot follows.

The path of the fist when performing a straight punch

The punch starts from "the guard" with the hand travelling in a STRAIGHT line towards your opponent. The fist performs a "corkscrew" type motion on the way to its target. Keep your elbows tucked in as your hand travels outward. On contact, the fist should have rotated so that the palm of the hand is almost facing the ground. Looking down your straight arm at the point of contact should be a bit like looking down the barrel of a shotgun. After completing the punch, QUICKLY return the fist to the guard position.

Your target for the straight punch is your opponent's jaw. In some instances a straight body punch is used, in this case, your target is your opponent's solar plexus and often requires a lowering of your stance by bending the knees to hit this target.

Uppercuts, Hooks and Body Rips

The fist and wrist alignment does not differ from the straight punch. These punches are designed to be used when standing close to your opponent. They are characterised by short, compact arm movements with power being generated with body movement rather than arm swinging.

The angle of the arm at the elbow joint remains fairly constant with these punches and the movement of your body propels them to their target.

An uppercut travels up the centre line of the body. Your target is under your opponent's jaw. Please Note: uppercuts are ALWAYS performed with this target in mind, even when punching a shield, you should not need to bend at the waist to perform this punch.

The target for a hook is the side of your opponent's head (the temple). With this punch, the elbow finishes at the same height as the fist and the body and hips rotate to propel the fist to the target.

Body rips are typically a low hook punch to the liver of your opponent (there are some exceptions to this rule).



Looking down the barrel



Uppercut



Hook

Practical punching application - shadowboxing

Shadowboxing, or boxing with an imaginary opponent is the best way to perfect your punching technique. If at home it is useful to practice in front of a mirror to perfect your form.

Combinations to practice include: Jab Jab left, Jab Uppercut left, Jab Hook left, Jab Rip left, Jab Cross right, Jab Uppercut right, Jab Hook right, Jab Rip right

Remember to use the skills of the "boxer's shuffle" when shadowboxing.

Protecting the hands - wraps and gloves

Hand wraps may be worn to protect the wrist and knuckles. I would definitely recommend hand wraps if you experience any wrist pain when boxing. These are NOT supplied by Out-Fit, you can purchase them from any sporting store including Rebel and Big W.

If you wish to wear these, you must learn to apply them quickly due to the short rest breaks we use at Out-Fit. I have included detailed notes on how to apply them at the end of this section.

There is an alternate form of hand wrap often called a "quick wrap". In my opinion these are of little use because they do not provide sufficient wrist support.

Glove liners are a cotton liner glove which are available free of charge from your trainer. If you use a pair you may take them home and wash them ready for your next workout. They are useful for absorbing perspiration on the hands when in the boxing glove.

Types of boxing gloves:

1. Bag Glove - this is a boxing glove with an thumb that is not padded. They are usually sold by size and are suitable for most general boxing and partner training. They are lighter than full boxing gloves and due to the un padded thumb care must be taken with correct thumb placement to avoid injury. These gloves are not recommended for individuals who suffer from any form of hand pain (for example arthritis) and are often unacceptable for ladies with long finger nails.



Bag Glove - unpadded thumb



Making a fist - tuck the thumb in

2. Boxing Gloves - these are characterised by a padded thumb. The whole glove is built with more strength and padding than a bag glove. Leather is the preferred material for a boxing glove. They are heavier and more expensive than bag gloves and are sold by the weight of the glove rather than the size. A suitable weight glove for general use is around 12 oz. They are the ONLY gloves that are acceptable for contact sparring training.



Boxing Glove - padded thumb



Making a fist - thumb position is controlled by the glove

3. Mixed Martial Arts (MMA) Gloves - these are a fingerless glove that allow the participant to grab or hold with the gloves on. They have only a minimum of padding over the knuckles. They have a practical use in a fitness session where, for example the participant is required to lift a sandbag then immediately follow this with punching.



MMA Glove - fingerless



Making a fist is the same as bare knuckles

Hand wraps - to protect the knuckles and support the wrist



Place hook seam side down around back of hand and down to wrist



A couple of times around the wrist then up to the knuckles



A couple of times around the knuckles



Take wrap around from behind the thumb



Pass between the small finger and ring finger



Then back around the thumb



Go between the ring and middle fingers



Back around behind thumb



Around wrist then back between the middle and index finger



Around the wrist



Securely wrap the thumb joint



A couple of times back around the knuckles



Wrap several times further down the wrist



Wrap the wrist in cross-over weave pattern



Secure the tab and make a fist to test for correct tension of wrap

How to hold the shield for power punching

The top of the shield has a piece of hose around the handle. If you hold the shield the other way up, the hose will dig into your body when being kicked.

When receiving straight punches it is important to get your shoulder behind the shield. The shield is always in contact with the body. If you leave a gap between the shield and your body it will just bounce around everywhere when it is struck by your partner.

When receiving uppercut punches the shield should be held parallel to the ground at upper chest height. Please do not hold the shield at lower waist height as is often the case - this forces the puncher to bend unnaturally at the waist and risk a lower back strain.



Correct stance to receive straight punches - shoulder behind shield



To receive uppercuts thread the arm through the bottom handle



Correct height to receive uppercuts

How to generate power in your punches - the 10 commandments

1. Perform the punch with the correct fist and wrist alignment
2. Have your feet planted firmly on the ground at the point of contact
3. Bend your knees and "push" off the ground when making contact
4. Rotate the hips towards your target
5. At the point of contact your body should be at full tension, the fist is clenched hard, the muscles of the forearms and shoulders are contracted, your core muscles are tight and your leg muscles are being used for the push needed.
6. Punch with speed. Your punching arm should move out AND BACK as fast as possible.
7. Do not "waste" power by projecting your punch past your target in a futile attempt to generate more power
8. When NOT punching, relax the shoulders and arms to preserve energy. You cannot punch fast if you are tense.
9. Always breathe out at the point of contact
10. Move after you have punched. A moving target is harder to hit, you will burn more calories if you move.



Start



Midpoint



End

Working with a partner - how to hold the mitts

YOU are responsible for holding the focus mitts correctly for your partner. Failure to do so causes BIG problems:

1. Your partner is very likely to damage their wrists or other body part.
2. You are more likely to suffer an injury to your wrists or forearms.
3. With incorrect technique, you will completely wreck your partner's workout because you are not providing the target to them in a way that allows them to punch with maximum energy or power.



Mitts are vertical



Head size gap between mitts



Catching the punch with the left mitt

Tips for holding the focus mitts

1. For straight punches, the focus mitts must be completely vertical. A downward angle forces the punch to skid off the mitt rather than striking it. Or worse still, forces your partner to strike with some sort of awkward upward punch thereby damaging the wrists. You should have the feeling that you are "pulling your wrists back" to keep the mitts vertical. During the round, constantly do a "self check" to ensure you are holding them correctly.
2. The correct focus mitt technique is to "mirror" the punching movement of your partner. If you are receiving a right punch, you should meet the punch by moving your right mitt into the punch. You should NEVER hold the mitts stationary. It may help to think of the focus mitts as a baseball catcher's glove, where you are required to "catch" your opponent's fist.
3. In performing the catching of the punch as described above, be mindful of the fact that you are NOT required to do this with any degree of force. You are to perform this with SKILL rather than POWER. If you smash down on your opponent's fist with any degree of power, you will soon damage his/her wrists and knuckles.
4. For most punching, the mitts should be held at around jaw height as this is the target. They should not be held in front of your face because the recoil may result in you punching yourself with the back of the mitt. The mitts should not, however be held so far apart that your partner is reaching from side to side to strike them. Leave about a head space between the mitts. When receiving a body rip punch, the mitts are held sideways but must be scooped inwards to prevent the punch from slipping off sideways.
5. As the focus mitt holder, YOU direct the action. You must move after each combination of punches and your partner will follow. The movements are only small but DO NOT stand in the one place for the entire round. You are robbing your partner of valuable energy expenditure.
6. The correct sequence for the mitt holder is:
 - remain stationary when your partner is performing the combination
 - force your partner to pause between each combination by removing the mitts (near chest)
 - move your stance slightly
 - show the mitts again ready for the next combination



Bad form for receiving a straight punch - the mitts have dropped

Tips for the puncher when hitting the mitts

1. Always use your body and legs to generate power. Punching is NOT an arm activity it is a WHOLE body activity
2. Always stand with the LEFT leg forward and always start with a LEFT punch.
3. Always punch ACROSS the focus mitts - your left punch hits your partners left mitt
4. Always return the hands to the guard position after the punch
5. Always pause after each combination. Do not let the combinations flow into each other
6. Always punch with the front of the knuckles, do not "flick" the focus mitts with a type of backhand strike



Hands held high in "the guard" position



Lead with the left



Remove mitts between combinations



Catching a body rip punch



Left Hook



Go champ!!

Kicking - foot striking area

For kicking drills, the stance is almost the same as for punching. You might find that you can achieve greater power if you extend the stance slightly. Always keep the hands up in the guard position when kicking.

Front Kicks

The striking area of the foot used for front kicks is the ball of the foot. Point the foot forward and pull the toes back to strike with this part of the foot.

The target is your opponent's midsection - that is around the waist area. The front kick is not to be performed to your opponent's knee cap!

To achieve power with this kick you must propel your hip forward. Your line of force should be parallel to the ground. It should NOT be performed with an upward sweeping arc of the leg.

Rib Kicks

Rib kicks (or thigh kicks) come around the body in a circular motion. The striking area is the TOP of the foot or the shin. To strike with this area of the foot, you must swivel on your supporting leg and turn the striking leg over to make contact. You DO NOT kick with the side of the foot as this will damage your knees.



Stance is the same as for punching (can be slightly longer)



Point the foot and pull the toes back for a front kick



For a kick to the ribs or thigh use the top of the foot or the shin



Knee strike



Closeup view of front kick



Closeup view of rib kick

Kicking - how to hold a kick shield

The top of the shield has a piece of hose around the handle. If you hold the shield the other way up, the hose will dig into your body when being kicked.

It is important to get your shoulder behind the shield to absorb the impact of the strikes being received. It is a reality that some individuals are able to generate an enormous amount of power when striking a shield. If you are unable to find a way of holding the shield to minimise this force on your body please ask your partner nicely to BACK OFF a bit.

When holding the shield to receive a front kick, the correct stance is to bend slightly at the waist. If you stand completely upright and hold the shield completely upright, your partner may find it difficult to propel the foot into the shield.

When receiving kicks to the thigh, your body faces your partner front on. The shield is placed to the side of your butt cheek. Please turn your front leg to the side so that in the event that your partner delivers a strong kick, your knee will bend in a natural fashion.



The top of the shield has a piece of hose over the handle



Correct stance to receive a front kick - note the forward bend



Correct stance to receive a thigh kick - note the forward leg is turned