

Strike (attack)

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A **strike** is an attack with an inanimate object, such as a weapon, or with a part of the human body intended to cause an effect upon an opponent or to simply cause harm to an opponent. An attack with the hand closed into a fist is called a punch. A strike with the leg or foot is generally called a kick. An attack with the head is called a headbutt.

Strikes are employed in most martial arts, but are explored more thoroughly in martial arts such as karate, taekwondo, boxing and Muay Thai. Some martial arts also use the fingertips, wrists, forearms, shoulders, back and hips to strike an opponent as well as the more conventional fists, palms, elbows, knees and feet that combat sports use. Some martial arts, such as judo employ no strikes at all, as do some combat sports, such as wrestling. In many martial systems, strikes are complemented by trapping and grappling.



Marines practicing striking

Contents

- 1 Punches
 - 1.1 Palm strike
 - 1.2 Knife hand
 - 1.3 Ridge hand
 - 1.4 Spear hand
 - 1.5 Hammerfist
 - 1.6 Extended Knuckle Strike
- 2 Kicks
 - 2.1 Knee
- 3 Other strikes
- 4 Striking Principles
- 5 The dangers of fist strikes
- 6 See also
- 7 References

Punches

Some other uses of the hand for striking are given below.

Palm strike

A strike using the palm of the hand. Whether the hand is open or the fingertips are folded against the bottom knuckles, palm strikes hit with the bottom part of the palm, where the hand meets the wrist. The hand is held perpendicular to the wrist to avoid hitting the softer inner wrist tissue against the target.

In general, if a strike is applied to certain pressure points, the resulting percussive shock can disrupt the nervous system causing shock and sometimes unconsciousness. The bottom ridge of the palm is a surprisingly solid striking surface, and can do just as much damage as a closed fist when utilized properly, with far less risk of injury to the striker's own hand.

The palm strike is useful as it is thrown in a more relaxed manner than a clenched fist. This is because clenching the fist shortens the extensor muscles of the wrist which counter the action of flexor muscles of the wrist used in punching. Many martial arts teach to keep the fist clench relaxed until impact in order to maximize the speed of the punch.

Targets are numerous and some examples include the nose, jaw ,ears, back of the head, the groin, the kidneys and abdominal cavity. Some combat sports, such as Pancrase, have forbidden strikes using the clenched fist but permitted strikes using the palm.

Knife hand

A strike using the part of the hand opposite the thumb (from the little finger to the wrist), familiar to many people as a **karate chop**, *Shuto* or *Tegatana*. This refers to strikes performed with the side of the knuckle of the small finger. Suitable targets for the knife hand strike include the mastoid muscles of the neck, the jugular, the throat, the collar bones, the 3rd vertebra (key stone of the spinal column), the upper arm, the wrist (knife hand block), the elbow (outside knife hand block), and the knee cap (leg throw). In many Japanese and Chinese martial arts systems, the knife hand is used to block as well as to strike.

Ridge hand

By tucking the thumb into the palm, a striking surface called the ridge-hand, or **reverse knife-hand** is formed, extending a few inches along the inside of the hand below the first knuckle of the first finger. Ridge-hand strikes commonly are delivered with a hooking motion, or with a straight arm swing

Suitable targets include the mastoid muscles of the neck, the jugular, throat, nose, jaw, and the groin.

Spear hand

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Delivered just as with a punch except that the hand is held open like with a knife hand. The intended striking area are the tips of the fingers. The ideal targets are the eyes and throat. Obviously, use of this technique is generally unsuitable against most other targets due to the high probability that one might break their fingers.

Hammerfist

A strike with the bottom of a clenched fist, using an action like swinging a hammer, but can also be used horizontally like a backfist strike using the bottom fist.

This strike will not damage the bones of the hands as there is no compression of the knuckles or metacarpals, and there is no leverage to bend the wrist.

The hammer fist strikes cricket ball sized areas on the body, hence is particularly effective for striking the Occiput, the temples, the nose, the mandible, the wrist (for blocking punches), the sternum, and the ear (although a cupped hand is more effective). The hammerfist is sometimes used during "ground-and-pound" striking in mixed martial arts to avoid damaging the bones of the hand.

Extended Knuckle Strike

Hand strikes can be delivered with an extended knuckle, rather than the classic fist configuration used for a traditional punch. One of the fingers is moved forwards so that the impact is made with the knuckle, concentrating force onto a smaller area. This kind of strike is optimized for attacks to pressure points, as the knuckles are much too fragile for percussive blows to other areas.

Kicks

Kicks are covered by a separate article, see Kick.

Knee

For knee strikes, see Knee.

Other strikes

See Category:Strikes

Striking Principles

Strikes in Asian martial arts and Western boxing have many of the same principles in common. These principles apply to strikes with most parts of the human body. These principles are typically learned

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by martial artists through multiple repetitions under the supervision of a qualified instructor. Many martial arts and texts include these principles, such as Karate^[1] and Jeet Kun Do.^[2] This is only a partial list.

1. Timing of muscular tension - The striker relaxes to the extent possible during the strike, tensing the muscles of much of the body only at the time of impact, then relaxing again to recoil the striking part. Relaxation enables the strike to achieve the greatest possible velocity during travel, while rigidity at impact allows the maximum transfer of force. This principle is summarized as: "Move like a whip and hit like a baseball bat."
2. Breath control - Practitioners may include a *kiai* or shout, to help tense the muscles at impact and distract or frighten the opponent. Strikers generally exhale as the strike nears the target. Breath control is also important to relax the body when not attacking; novice strikers often bleed significant energy because they are tense at inappropriate times.
3. Penetration - Strikes should aim for a point 4-6 inches behind the target surface, to impart the most energy into the target. The striker in combat should attempt to strike through the target area, not just contact the surface.
4. Focus - Strikes should channel force through a small area of the attacker's body. For example, this is the knuckles of the middle finger and index finger during a Karate reverse punch, or the foot sword in a Tae Kwon Do side kick technique. Focus helps in achieving proper penetration and in maximizing the damage at the point of impact.
5. Summation of force - Muscles are activated in a precise sequence to maximize the force generated. Strikes should generally be thrown with some measure of shifting body weight supporting the blow, as opposed to just the striking arm or leg. For example, in the straight lead made famous by Bruce Lee, the traditional boxing jab is made more forceful by driving off the rear leg and shifting body weight into the blow, while twisting the trunk and shoulder to further enhance the striking force.
6. Footwork - Proper footwork is used to enable the proper balancing of the body, to support combinations of strikes and launch strikes from the proper angle or distance. This is among the most complex elements of striking, as power ultimately flows from the legs in striking and optimizing the ability to throw combinations involves precise footwork.
7. Combinations - Strikers may use combinations of techniques to ensure one or more strikes impact their opponents. These attacks are thrown at various targets on the body, with the greatest force typically thrown with a particular technique in the sequence.
8. Level of attack - The height of attack is often varied, such as a jab to the head followed by a kick to the ribs. By varying the level of attack, strikers open the guard of their opponent.
9. Timing and Rhythm - Experienced strikers learn through repetition and muscle memory when (not just how) to launch particular strikes, based on the circumstances they are facing. Fights and fighters may have ebbs and flows in momentum and action that become predictable. Disrupting this flow may give the striker an advantage.
10. Avoid "telegraphing" - Telegraphing refers to moving the striking body part prior to actually launching the blow. Telegraphing signals the intent to the opponent and increases the likelihood the strike will not be effective. In general, the striking weapon should move first, with the body driving behind it. This requires proper distancing and footwork.
11. Deception - Strikers use feints or distractions to disguise the timing or direction of their attacks.

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Stomping the foot, noise, frequent hand movement, head movement, switching the guard position, etc. are common feints. Using feints, then attacking at multiple levels and with various techniques may help deceive the opponent, defeating their guard.

The dangers of fist strikes

The human hand is made up of many small bones which may be damaged by heavy impact. If a hard part of the opponent's body or other hard object is inadvertently struck, the metacarpals may splay on impact and break. Boxers tape their hands so as to hold the metacarpals together and keep them from splaying. One can toughen one's bones by striking objects to induce osteoclasts (cells which form bone) to grow bone over the struck area increasing the density of bone at the striking surface (reference needed, see search pubmed at www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed.)

The wrist must also be kept in proper alignment during a fist strike. If the wrist bends on impact, it can easily be sprained, dislocated or broken. Boxers tape their wrists to reduce wrist flex.

See also

- makiwara
- punching bag

References

1. ^ Funakoshi, Gichin. "Karate-Do Kyohan - The Master Text" Tokyo. Kodansha International; 1973.
2. ^ Lee, Bruce and Lee, Linda. "Tao of Jeet Kun Do" Burbank, CA. O'Hara Publications; 1975.

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