

# ***NODAN KARATE***



***The Five Principles***

**by Nodan**

# **Nodan Karate**

## **The Five Principles**

**by NODAN**

**c. 2016 Lighthouse Productions**  
**All rights reserved**

**ISBN: 13:978-1533176493**  
**ISBN: 10:1533176493**

**Revised June 2018**

# **Warning !**

**The breaking and self-defense demonstrations shown in this book can be dangerous and should not be attempted without the supervision of a qualified instructor!**

# **CONTENTS**

**Forward 1**

**Nodan Karate 3**

## **THE FIVE PRINCIPLES 24**

- 1<sup>st</sup> Proper Bone Alignment 25**
- 2<sup>nd</sup> 1-2 Timing 38**
- 3<sup>rd</sup> Extension of Ki 58**
- 4<sup>th</sup> Correct Breathing 64**
- 5<sup>th</sup> Soft and Hard 65**

**Kicking Techniques 69**

**Blocking Techniques 82**

**Self-Defense 88**

**YouTube Videos 116**

## Forward

In 1971, I received a black belt in Shorin-ryu karate. After another ten years of training in several other striking arts, I reached the upper limits of my physical ability as a karateka. I was aware of stories about “enlightened” masters who possessed extraordinary psychic power and superhuman strength and began my quest for Enlightenment that would make me a great karate master.

I discovered that karate can be practiced on two levels. The first is physical, where only one’s natural abilities are used. The breaking experiments demonstrated in my karate videos were all performed at this physical level.

The second level is spiritual, in which the martial arts become the Way to Enlightenment. To follow this path, I trained with an “enlightened” master, spent many hours in meditation, and engaged in a number of occult practices.

In time, I came under the influence of an occult spirit of enormous ferocity and power that I could not expel by force of will. I was only delivered from this evil entity when I repented and surrendered my life to Jesus. A wonderful spirit of love poured in from above and I experienced a sublime peace that cannot be expressed in words. In that moment, I **knew** Jesus was real. Besides this startling revelation, my “enlightenment” revealed that a spirit realm does, in fact, exist and that our consciousness continues after death.

In 2004, I released a dvd intended to warn practitioners against seeking Enlightenment through their martial arts. At that time, I created my “Nodan” character as a disguise, in order to protect the identities of people who would not want to be associated with my past occult experiences. The critics rightly savaged my film, calling it cheesy and pointing to the awful acting and poor production values. Also, my anonymity

generated false information on the internet, with one website going so far as to post bogus photos of the “real” Nodan!

In 2011, I wrote an account of my experience, but the book failed to adequately communicate the warning and has since been discontinued.

In spite of these failures, I have benefited from being unknown, because humility finds a refuge in anonymity. In addition, the buffoonish make-believe character, “no dan” (no rank), is a fitting parody for my misguided quest to become a great master with “powers” like my teacher, Sensei.

The Five Principles are the result of reverse engineering the breaking experiments I conducted in 2004 and 2005. While none of these principles are new to the martial arts, they have largely disappeared from modern karate practice. This book is a guide for those who want to improve the power of their techniques, especially as they relate to street defense. As such, the book is a companion resource to my karate videos at the **nodankarate** channel on YouTube.

Peace be with you,



## Nodan Karate

Nodan Karate is not a “style” of martial art, but rather the application of a proven striking method that utilizes The Five Principles and flexible makiwara practice to develop “one strike” power.

Throughout the book, a number of street attacks are shown that demonstrate “one strike” applications, because *what we practice is what we will do when faced with a real attack*. Ultimately, the goal of street defense training is to create a level of confidence that helps students meet the everyday challenges of life and affirms the martial art proverb: *A man learns to fight so he will not have to fight*.

## Makiwara Training

Along with developing expertise in The Five Principles, the primary tool for forging “one strike” power is the makiwara (striking post). The traditional Okinawan version is a wooden post wrapped in rice straw and buried three feet in the ground. These outdoor posts are stiff and hard, with limited flexibility, and serious users develop thick calluses and bone calcifications on their hands and feet, which can lead to joint problems later in life.

In the early 1990s, I taught street defense to two young men, Yakov and Yohan, who were avid guitar players. To minimize their risk for hand injuries, I fabricated a flexible indoor striking post with a thick layer of soft rubber padding. The flexible post was based on the principle of “graduated resistance,” in which resistance increases over distance. Over time, this proved to be a safe and efficient way to develop powerful “one strike” techniques. Moreover, callus formation is not necessary for practical self-defense.



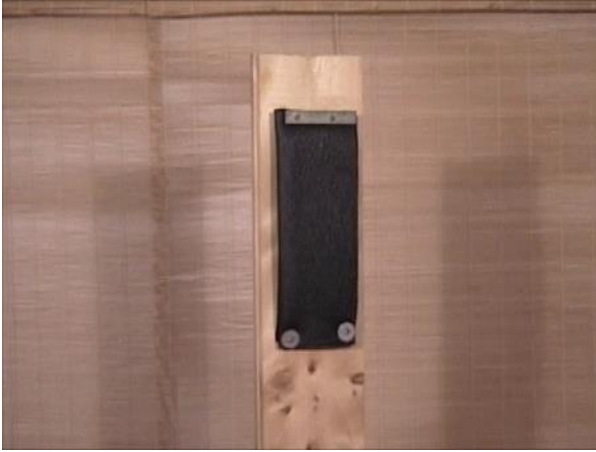
When conducting board breaking experiments, I used a single layer of rubber padding as a precaution against knuckle bruising, in case the board stack did not break. On those few occasions when the boards did not break on the first attempt, the thin layer of rubber padding provided a margin of safety. During my years of training and teaching, I always tried to put safety first, because I believe karate is for self-defense, not self-mutilation.

Makiwara practice is essential for developing “one strike” power, because graduated resistance builds bone and muscle strength. In addition, striking makiwara creates a different timing and “feeling” in the body that cannot be learned by only punching in the air.

The video, “Nodan Makiwara,” shows how to construct a flexible indoor makiwara and board holder from materials commonly found at most home improvement centers.



**I trained using a flexible makiwara for 12 years before filming my breaking experiments. Graduated resistance strengthens the body core and develops 3<sup>rd</sup> Principle, Extension of Ki (follow through).**



**This post was made from two 1x8 inch wide pine boards. Resistance can be adjusted by changing the width or type of wood. Several layers of soft rubber padding have been attached to the post using a bracket and fender washers.**



**Post holder was built with 2x4s and framing brackets attached to  $\frac{3}{4}$  inch plywood using 4 inch long bolts.**

## **Un-spaced Horizontal Board Breaking**

The correlation between flexible makiwara practice and “one strike” power is illustrated in the following suspended board breaks, in which I used my “weak side” left hand to highlight the effectiveness of the method. These experiments were conducted while I was in my late fifties, in order to show the advantage of sound technique (The Five Principles) over sheer athletic prowess.

Board breaking is relatively meaningless unless there is a protocol that provides a standardized method for measuring board strength. I conducted my breaking experiments using the scientific method, so they can be repeated by following the protocols on pages 14-16. Thus, karateka can test the power of their striking techniques against an empirically based standard.

### **5 Board Break with “weak side” Reverse Punch**



**5 board stacks are nearly 4 inches thick and can support a 650 lb. (295.45 kg) barbell placed across the centerline of the board running parallel with the grain (see p. 15).**

## 5 Board Break with “weak side” Elbow Strike



**This was my strongest horizontal “weak side” strike. Note how the spine and rear leg form a straight line.**



**Elbow strikes eliminate the power losses through the elbow, wrist, and knuckle joints in the hand.**

#### 4 Board Break with “weak side” Bent Wrist



**WARNING!** Nerve damage to the wrist and arm can occur if the hands are not properly conditioned beforehand with the makiwara.



This “weak side” bent wrist break was my most difficult breaking experiment.

## Core strengthening exercise



**The shoulders are squared to the target, while the hips are positioned at a cocked 45 degree angle.**



**The hips and upper body are rotated forcefully into the post and the entire body is focused hard. This is an exercise designed to strengthen the body's core.**

### **Training Both Sides**

Training both sides of every technique is an important part of self-defense training, because an injury to either side can occur before or during a street confrontation. Street attacks are fluid and unpredictable, and having the option of using either hand is a major strategic advantage.

#### **Left and Right 4 Board Palm Breaks from the Neutral Stance position**



### **Left and Right 7 Board Bottom Fist Breaks**



**In spite of practicing more with my “weak side” left hand, the “strong side” right broke 7 boards with greater ease.**



## **Nodan Karate is street self-defense**



**“One strike” power from the neutral stance position is an essential skill for close quarter street defense.**

## **5 Board Break with “weak side” Palm Strike**



**This was my strongest upper level striking technique because the circular arc of the arm generates greater speed and a “centered” stance transfers the maximum bodyweight into the board stack.**

## Street Application



**Grab and choke holds from the front can be defended using a circular palm strike to the temple or rib cage.**



**Nodan uses the “unbendable arm” technique (p. 82) to minimize power losses through his elbow joint.**

## **Board Breaking Experiments**

I used un-spaced suspended horizontal board breaking to give tangible evidence of “one strike” power. This kind of breaking requires a substantial body weight transfer (Mass) and enough speed (Velocity) to overtake the movement of a hanging bag. A break will fail if the strike does not penetrate through the last board **before** the bag begins to move. While the dead weight of a suspended bag provides some initial resistance, this is minimal compared to the resistance afforded by using rigid supports.

Speed is a significant factor when assessing the efficacy of the horizontal striking and kicking techniques used in street defense. The resistance of the attacker’s body is more akin to the resistance of the suspended bag. This is why horizontal strikes are more damaging when they are applied against a stationary or advancing adversary, and less effective against an opponent who is moving or leaning or away.

## **Breaking Protocols**

My boards were cut from 1x12 inch wide (actual mill size  $\frac{3}{4}$  x 11 $\frac{1}{4}$  inches) white pine donor boards, which are available at home improvement centers throughout Canada and the U.S. Pine boards are often used in breaking competitions and demonstrations because they are relatively easy to break. Thus, it is possible to compare the relative strengths of a variety of techniques (compare the 7 board bottom fist break on p. 11 with the 1 board push break on p. 60).

Each of my breaking experiments used 1x12x10 inch wide white pine boards. Testing revealed that each board could support, on average, a 130 lb. (59 kg) barbell placed across the centerline of the wood and running parallel with the grain.

It is not possible to assess the power in board breaking without having a measurable standard of board strength. Wood strength can vary widely depending on type, size, and moisture content, so a sample from each donor board should be tested just before breaking to insure consistency with the established standard. Each board stack was assembled from the same donor board with the grain patterns aligned and facing in the same direction. The heavy bag used in most of my experiments weighed 75 lbs.

When the boards are un-spaced, the resistance increases proportionally. Each 5 board stack could support at least a 650 lb. (295.5 kg) weight ( $5 \times 130 = 650$ ). Board strength can be adjusted by changing the width. For example, five 8 inch wide boards @ 130 lb. test strength are equal to five 10 inch wide boards @ 130 lb. test strength.



**Board holder was made from  $\frac{3}{4}$  inch plywood. It was cut to fit the curvature of the 75 lb. bag and was attached with rubber bungee cords.**



**On average, each test board supported a 130 lb. (59 kg) barbell placed across its centerline for one full second.**



**On average, test boards broke with 135 lbs. (61.4 kg).  
(See the YouTube video, “Nodan Board Testing.”)**



**Board strength can be adjusted by changing width.**



**The suspended 5 board stack is more difficult to break than the rigidly supported 5 boards.**

## Speed Factor

Hand and foot speed is a function of many thousands of repetitions of each technique. Because flexibility increases speed and quickness, karateka should maintain a stretching routine that works the entire body. The significance of speed (Velocity) as compared to body weight transfer (Mass) for suspended board breaking is reflected in a physics formula, in which the speed of the strike is squared.

$$\text{Force} = \frac{\text{Mass} \times \text{Velocity}^2}{2}$$

### 7 Board Downward Break with “weak side” left hand



Downward breaking is more efficient than suspended horizontal breaking, because it generates greater hand speed and leverages more bodyweight onto the stack. Also, rigid supports reduce power loss that occurs when the suspended bag absorbs energy from the strike.

**Nodan tests the limits of his horizontal striking power**



**While Nodan easily broke 7 boards using his “weak side” bottom fist strike (p. 18), he could not break 7 using his “strong side” punch.**



**Nodan’s thrust could not generate sufficient speed to overtake the movement of the 75 lb. bag, which can be observed absorbing the energy of the blow.**



## **Strength Factor**

I never used steroids and did not develop large muscles, but lifting heavy weights for seven years strengthened my body core and enhanced my ability to break multiple board stacks. Note, however, that weightlifting strength must be transfered into “one strike” power with makiwara practice and the application of The Five Principles.



**I began lifting heavy weights in high school.**



**My college weightlifting coach does a one-arm bent press with 150 lbs. using leverage similar to The Five Principles. (At the time, “Coach” weighed 148 lbs.)**

## Aikido, Sword, and Jo



**I studied aikido and weapons with an “enlightened” master. Aikido teaches circular movement, the unbendable arm, and the extension of ki, which I incorporated into street defense. (My brother, on right, has trained in aikido for 25 years.)**



**Aikido is a throwing art designed to control an attacker while causing as little damage as possible.**

## Quan Li



**Li's speed, power, and form are a benchmark of excellence for the traditional striking arts.**

I had been a practicing black belt for ten years before I met my most influential karate teacher, Quan Li. As we trained together the first time, it became apparent that Li's technique was far superior to mine. I was surprised by his immovable stances, the heaviness of his blocks, and by the unusual power in his strikes. He explained that I was using "muscle power," while he was leveraging his strength using "centered" stances based on bone alignment. The difference was astounding. Quan Li was the best karateka I had ever seen.

After our first workout, I concluded I would have to learn "centered" stances and Quan's precept that "the hips always precede the movement of the arm," if I was ever to approach his level of expertise. Li graciously agreed to teach me his basics and we became good friends. He was my teacher and training partner for five years.



**Li performs kata in YouTube video, “Nodan Teacher.”**

# **The Five Principles**

## THE FIVE PRINCIPLES

### 1<sup>st</sup> Proper Bone Alignment

Stances are *centered* in the hara, a point two inches below the navel

### 2<sup>nd</sup> 1-2 Timing

The hips are fully rotated *before* the striking arm or leg is extended

### 3<sup>rd</sup> Extension of Ki

Follow through every technique  
(*Follow Through* Principle)

### 4<sup>th</sup> Correct Breathing

*Inhaling* through the nose and *exhaling* through the mouth using the diaphragm

### 5<sup>th</sup> Soft and Hard

The correct sequence of *relaxation* and *contraction* of all major muscle groups

## 1<sup>st</sup> Principle: Proper Bone Alignment

I learned “centered” stances from Quan Li, who taught that bone alignment is foundational to all martial arts. Whether training stances are low or high, the center of gravity must be located, or “centered,” in the hara, a point two inches below the navel. To do this correctly, the “pelvic tilt” position of the hips must be maintained throughout every technique.

The ability to “move in center” becomes critical for the effective transfer of power through the hips. To learn this principle, I maintained a “pelvic tilt” position and placed my mind in the hara, in order to “think from the center.”

Below, Nodan stands at attention with his hands in the closed gate position. His feet grip the floor, his spine is straight, his head erect, and his shoulders are down and back. With his hips held in a “pelvic tilt” position, his “centered” stance becomes immovable.



**Yakov cannot push Nodan out of “centered” stance, because Nodan has re-directed Yakov’s energy downward. Using this leverage advantage, Nodan easily moves Yakov backwards.**

### **“Centered” Stance Testing**



**Nodan is assisted by Yakov and three former students in stance testing demonstration, in which the three men will try to push Yakov out of his one-leg crane stance.**



**Yakov holds “center” as the men try to push him out of his stance. Then, by “moving in center,” he drives the three men backwards.**



**“Centered” front and back stepping**

**As Yakov steps in and Yohan steps back, they hold “center” as they seek out the correct foot placement. Note how they remain in upright “centered” stance positions throughout the exercise.**



**Yakov allows his punching arm to release and swing free,  
to lessen the shock from Yohan's outside forearm block.  
(See the YouTube video, "Nodan Students.")**

### **“Centered” Straddle Stance Defense**



**Yohan initiates a takedown attempt. Yakov steps back into a “centered” straddle stance.**



**Yakov's "centered" stance causes his feet to "stick" to the floor. This allows him to thwart takedown attempt and counter attack using a downward reverse punch.**



**Yakov follows up with a downward elbow strike.**

**“Moving in center” with spinning step**



**Nodan raises his hands to give attacker false confidence. Effective street defense strategies include understanding criminal psychology and using surprise and deception.**



**His initial pivot moves him out of the line of fire.**



**He continues to spin into a “centered” straddle stance as he traps the gunman’s weapon arm.**



**Nodan counter attacks with a hook punch to the temple.**

**“Moving in center” with cross-step**



**Nodan uses a fighting stance against a knife threat. His body is relaxed as he applies the “two-fold gaze” (p. 93).**



**He may use a head feint before preemptively moving in to block away the weapon hand.**



He maintains “center” as he cross-steps toward his opponent.

### 3 Board Break with cross-chest knife hand strike



In order to break the 3 boards, Nodan must momentarily plant both feet in a “centered” straddle stance as he executes knife hand strike. (Note: striking above one’s own shoulder height reduces leverage.)



### **“Centered” Front Kick**



**Yakov executes a front kick from a “centered” stance.**



**From his “centered” one-leg stance, Yakov uses the 1-2 Timing (2<sup>nd</sup> Principle) and the bag caroms off his foot.**

### **Fore Fist Bone Alignment**

Until the point of contact, excessive tension in muscles, tendons, and ligaments dissipates the transfer of power from the hara (“center”) to the arms and legs. This is reflected in the 5<sup>th</sup> Principle, Soft and Hard (p. 65), in which the body is not entirely tensed until it focuses hard upon impact.

The interosseous membrane connects the two bones in the forearm (the radius and the ulna). Turning the fore fist at a 45 degree angle upon impact causes the minimum amount of tension in the membrane, which reduces power loss through the arm. Besides properly aligning the two bones in the forearm, the 45 degree rotation makes it easier to keep the elbow under throughout the movement of the arm. This is critical for the straight line thrust punch, because significant power loss can occur if the elbow is allowed to turn outward.

To find the ideal fore fist thrust position, extend both arms against a wall as if trying to push it over. Then, with the arms held straight and the elbows turned under, form a fist from the hand position as it pushes against the wall.



**Nodan’s fore fist assumes a 45 degree angle as he breaks the 4 board stack from a one-legged crane stance (p. 46).**

## 2<sup>nd</sup> Principle: 1-2 Timing

Nodan's hips are fully rotated **before** his upper body and arm are extended into the target. The 1-2 Timing uses the first principle, Proper Bone Alignment, to generate speed and power. Although most karate styles teach that power is generated through the hips, few emphasize this two-step process. After receiving a black belt in Shorin-ryu, I trained for ten years in a number of throwing and striking arts before I learned this principle from my last karate teacher, Quan Li.



**Step 1- As the hips are fully rotated, the upper body and striking arm move naturally and remain relaxed.**



**Step 2- Nodan's upper body is rotated 45 degrees into the target and his punching arm is extended.**

In the 1-2 Timing, the hip rotation (step 1) and the upper body rotation (step 2) are distinctly separate actions that transfer body weight and accelerate the striking arm.

Note the bone alignments in Nodan's finishing position. His hips are in a "pelvic tilt" position, his fore fist forms a 45 degree angle, and his rear leg and spine form a straight line. His shoulders are held in the down and back position as they are rotated 45 degrees.

Because the hand is quicker than the eye, full speed strikes appear to be one continuous motion. Therefore, beginners must consciously separate the two steps within each blocking, kicking, and striking movement until the 1-2 Timing becomes a natural part of every technique.

## **Quan Li taught the 1-2 Timing**



**Step 1- Quan's hips are rotated using a powerful hip thrust "before" his striking arm is extended.**



**Step 2- Li's upper body rotates toward target and punch is extended as the shoulders remain down and back.**

## Close Hook Punch using the 1-2 Timing



**Nodan is grabbed by the lapels and feigns surrender, then lowers his arm into the ready thrust position.**



- Step 1- Nodan turns his hips toward the target as his punching arm moves naturally with rotation.**
- Step 2- He rotates his torso and shoulders and extends the striking arm through the 3 board stack.**

## 1-2 Timing from Neutral Stance



**Step 1- From a ready thrust position (left photo), the hips are fully rotated toward the target (right photo).**



**Step 2- The upper body rotates 45 degrees toward the target and the palm strike is extended.**



#### **4 Board Break from Neutral Stance**



**As his hips rotate towards the target, Nodan's striking arm is relaxed and moves naturally.**



**Nodan's upper body rotates 45 degrees into the target and his striking arm is extended.**



### 1-2 Timing from Side Straddle Stance



**The 1-2 Timing generates power in the hips before the bent wrist strike is actively extended to target.**

#### **4 Board Break from Side Straddle Stance**



**Step 1- The hips are fully rotated as his arm follows naturally and stays relaxed.**



**Step 2- The bent wrist strike is extended as the entire body is focused hard on impact.**

#### **4 Board Break from Crane Stance**



**This break required a strong “centered” stance.**



**Step 1- Nodan turns his hips toward the target as the punching arm moves naturally with his hips.**



**Step 2- Nodan extends his strike into the 4 board stack.**



**The 75 pound bag absorbs the excess energy of the strike.**

### **Lunging Elbow Strike with 1-2 Timing**



**As he begins to step, he executes a knife hand block against the weapon hand of an imaginary attacker.**



**He steps into a “centered” straddle stance (left photo).  
Step 1- He rotates his hips sharply towards the target.**



**Step 2- He rotates his upper body and elbow into the 4 boards.**

### **Back Head Strike defense uses 1-2 Timing**



**Nodan pins the attacker's arms to his chest and prepares to deliver a stunning back head strike.**



**The speed needed to execute this 2 board break is generated by a forward “double whip” 1-2 Timing that “throws” the head backwards into the target.**



## Back Elbow Strike defense with 1-2 Timing



**Nodan is grabbed in a one arm choke hold. He drops into a “centered” stance and prepares to throw an elbow strike.**



**He can use both arms for added power (left photo).  
The 1-2 Timing is applied in the reverse direction.**



### **1-2 Timing in Naihanchi (Tekki) Shodan**

In the video, “Nodan Katas,” The Five Principles are applied to one kata from each of three different striking arts, which gives the forms a different look and energy.



**Nodan is positioned in a “centered” straddle stance.**



**Step 1- His hips rotate sharply towards the target (left).  
Step 2- He rotates upper body and extends elbow strike.**



**Nodan drops his hands into position for the next technique.**



**His hips are fully rotated before his arms are extended.**

**“Thrust” vs. “Push”**



**As part of their black belt test, Yakov and Yohan were required to perform techniques on a suspended bag.**



**See the YouTube video, “Nodan Students.”**



**Yakov executes a simultaneous downward forearm block and reverse thrust punch.**



**The bag caroms off Yakov's fist like a pinball, because he uses 1-2 Timing. This is what visually distinguishes a "thrust" punch from a substantially weaker "push."**

### **Push vs. Thrust Experiment**



**Nodan strikes a 4 board stack with his “strong side” right hand without using the 1-2 Timing. His “push” lacks the speed to overtake the movement of bag.**



**He applies 1-2 Timing to his “weak side” left hand “thrust” and easily breaks the same 4 board stack.**

The 1-2 Timing must be studied well, because all striking, kicking, and blocking techniques rely on this principle to generate maximum speed and power. To learn this principle, the mind must be located in the “center,” a point two inches below the navel. If the mind is in the striking hand, the arm will lead rather than follow the hip rotation, resulting in a push rather than a properly leveraged thrust.

It is noteworthy that the first two principles, Proper Bone Alignment and 1-2 Timing, are used by athletes to hit a baseball, strike a golf ball, and stroke a tennis ball. Ironically, these two essential precepts have become largely lost to modern karate. I could not have executed the 4 and 5 board horizontal breaks using my “weak side” left hand, without proficiency in these two principles.

### **Throwing a baseball uses the 1-2 Timing**



**Nodan compares the 1-2 Timing used in karate’s blocking, striking, and kicking techniques to the 1-2 Timing used to throw a baseball, in which the hips are fully rotated before the throwing arm is extended. “Throwing” a baseball is analogous to “throwing” a reverse punch.**

### **3rd Principle: Extension of Ki (Follow Through)**

For the Asian martial arts, ki (chi) is the vital energy and activating life force inherent in all living things. As such, some masters actively cultivate the ability to channel and project this unseen energy. I do not advocate seeking this energy source. Rather, I describe this principle as “Follow Through,” in which one’s natural physical energy is mentally “extended” through each technique “all the way to infinity.”

This principle is essential for breaking multiple un-spaced board stacks, because the kinetic energy of a strike dissipates as it is absorbed by each successive board. Follow Through helps to maintain enough speed to break the last board before the suspended bag begins to move.

Along with the Proper Bone Alignment and 1-2 Timing, the Follow Through principle is emphasized in many sporting movements that involve hitting, throwing, and kicking a ball.



**The flexible makiwara helps to develop Follow Through.**

### **Follow Through with Bent Wrist Strike**



**Nodan's bent wrist break from a weak, cross chest position required a concentrated Follow Through.**



**The strike is “extended” beyond the 3 boards.**



### Follow Through with the Push Break

This is a relatively safe, but difficult, test of hip rotation and Follow Through. The push break is deceptively named because no amount of “push” will result in a successful break. The challenge is to “thrust” abruptly against the 1x12x10 inch wide pine board with at least 135 lbs. (61.4 kg) of force **before** the suspended bag moves. This is a “zero inch” break, because the thrusting hand is in contact against the board before the break is initiated.

This technique requires concentrated Follow Through and is not possible to execute without the Proper Bone Alignment and a well-developed 1-2 Timing.



In the left photo, Nodan’s stance is relaxed, his rear leg and spine are straight, his head is held erect as if suspended on a string, and his elbow is under to minimize power loss through his elbow joint. Note that his right arm remains relaxed and that his explosive hip rotation (Step 1 of the 1-2 Timing) is barely discernible in the photo on right.

## 1 Board Push Break with “weak side” left hand



**Nodan follows through as he rotates his upper body and arm into the target (Step 2 of the 1-2 Timing).**

In the photo above, Nodan rotates his upper body and thrusting arm through the target (Step 2 of the 1-2 Timing). As he executes the break, he focuses hard and exhales with a kiai yell. Throughout the movement, he follows through as if projecting his energy “all the way to infinity.”

Note how his right arm remains relaxed at his side throughout the technique. This is the application of the 5<sup>th</sup> Principle, Soft and Hard (p. 65), in which the muscles not essential to the strike remain soft and relaxed, in order to conserve energy and maintain flexibility.

During the push break, the hand never breaks contact with the board. The break occurs when the pisiform bone located on the outside part of the base of the wrist is pressed firmly against the board. This action causes the ridge of the hand to rotate slightly off the board, which gives the false impression that the hand has momentarily broken contact. It hasn't.

### **Follow Through along two vectors**



**Nodan steps in and jams an overhead knife attack. A simultaneous rising block and palm strike to the jaw gives his adversary no time to counter attack.**



**Nodan projects his rising block outward to intercept the  $\frac{3}{4}$  swinging arc of the assailant's attacking arm.**



**He follows through along both vectors. This simultaneous rising block and palm strike are representative of the more advanced levels of the basic block and counter techniques.**

## 4<sup>th</sup> Principle: Correct Breathing

Breathing must be controlled with the diaphragm- inhaling through the nose and exhaling through the mouth. Shuri-te styles like Shorin-ryu and Shotokan prefer to train using a natural breathing pattern. Naha-te styles like Goju-ryu and Uechi-ryu practice Sanchin, a kata that utilizes a forced breathing technique and dynamic tension to strengthen the body core. I have trained in each one of these styles and can attest to the fact that they all teach, “inhale through the nose and exhale through the mouth using the diaphragm.”

When executed vocally, the “kiai” is a primal roar that emanates from the depths of the hara or “center.” When performed without the yell, Nodan’s kiai manifests as a forceful rush of air on every focused technique (See the YouTube video, “Nodan Dagger Form”).



**Correct Breathing uses the diaphragm (left photo), not the intercostal muscles in the upper chest (right photo). Boxers, players of wind instruments, and opera singers are specifically trained to breathe using the diaphragm.**

## 5<sup>th</sup> Principle: Soft and Hard

The Soft and Hard principle refers to the “sequential” contraction and relaxation of the major skeletal muscles in the body. For example, in the reverse thrust punch, the legs, abdominals, and hips are contracted first, while the muscles in the upper body remain relaxed. Next, the torso and arms rotate into the target and the entire body focuses hard upon impact. Immediately after the strike, the body again becomes soft, prepared for a follow up technique.

Developing proficiency in Soft and Hard requires many thousands of repetitions until the transitions within each technique flow without tension. The application of Soft and Hard is illustrated in the YouTube video, “Nodan Dagger Form,” in which Nodan executes 89 fully focused techniques in 65 seconds. Not surprisingly, this is the last of The Five Principles to be fully mastered.

### Soft and Hard street application



**WARNING!** Wear safety goggles when practicing eye strikes.



**Nodan deflects the knife thrust using a bent wrist block.**



**With continuous soft and hard movement, Nodan executes a spear hand strike to the attacker's eye.**



**He follows with a continuous motion snap punch that applies Soft and Hard to maximize speed.**



**Nodan's punching hand snaps back to ready position.**



### Soft and Hard Combination Break



**Nodan's first strike is a snapping back fist, in which his lower body is focused hard as the hips throw out the striking hand. During this movement, his upper body stays soft until focusing hard on impact.**



**The second strike flows from the first. The Soft and Hard principle quickens transitions between techniques and the elapsed time between the breaks is about .2 of a second.**

## Kicking Techniques

Kicking techniques also follow The Five Principles. For street defense, the middle and lower level applications of the front, side, and back kick are the most practical. Lower level kicks are easier and safer to perform and are more effective against un-trained street criminals.

### Front Thrust Kick

In the front thrust kick, the hips are rotated 45 degrees as the knee is raised. This opening of the hips releases the hamstring muscles, which allows for greater speed and flexibility of movement. The knee should be raised higher than the intended target, because a “down and in” motion gives the front thrust kick its power.



## **5 Board Break with Front Thrust Kick**



**Nodan raises his knee above the intended target.**



**The “down and in” trajectory gives the kick its power.**



**Nodan’s leg extension reveals concentrated Follow Through.**

### **Front Kick with the lead foot**



**Kicking with lead foot is more difficult because the “center” must first be shifted backwards.**



**He maintains a “centered” stance and breaks 3 boards.**

# **Front kick defense using the lead foot.**



**Nodan is threatened with a hatchet at close range.**



**As attacker hitches to swing, Nodan makes a slight forward shift with the back foot to set his “center” in motion, before blocking and kicking the assailant.**



**Nodan blocks the attacker's weapon hand as he kicks him in the groin. His right hand is poised to punch.**



### **Joint Hold with Knee Kick**



**Against a knife hold up, Yakov applies a joint hold and follows up with a knee kick counter.**

## Front Kick Defense



**Yohan waits for opponent to commit to punching attack.  
Timing is critical in defending against a moving assault.**



**Yohan kicks to solar plexus while maintaining “center.”**

## Low Side Kick Defense



**Yakov assumes a “surrender” position.**



**He preemptively moves in and strikes toward attacker’s face to draw his attention upward.**



**He transitions his hands to guard position as he prepares to execute a low side kick.**



**Yakov can kick through the attacker's knee while keeping out of reach of a knife thrust.**

## Low Back Kick Defense



**As Nodan turns, his lead hand feigns a strike toward the attacker's face and then transitions into a block.**



**Head to heel, Nodan follows through the 4 board stack.**

## Blocking Techniques

Blocking techniques also follow The Five Principles. The formal downward, middle, and rising blocks are examples of striking techniques that hit with the entire body and not only with the arm and shoulder.

These blocks apply the “unbendable arm,” in which the arm is extended in a soft/hard state of tension using the triceps muscles in back of the upper arm and the latissimus dorsi muscles that run along the upper sides of the back. The “unbendable arm” means the arm will not bend once it is in the desired position. This can make the arm feel like, “a slightly bent steel rod wrapped in cotton cloth.”

The formal karate blocks use the full range of motion to develop proper form. With practice, karateka learn to project strength into the shorter and quicker street applications of these formal kata techniques.

### 5 Board Break with Formal Downward Block



**Nodan uses “unbendable arm” technique to reduce power loss through his elbow joint.**

### **Downward Block Street Defense**



**From “surrender” position, Nodan patiently waits.**



**He steps slightly back and to his right and intercepts the front kick using a shorter and quicker downward block.**



### **Formal Rising Block**



**The blocking arm moves to the front and the hips are rotated.**



**Nodan lifts his blocking arm using the shoulder muscles and the latissimus dorsi muscles on the upper sides of his back.**

## Rising Block Defense



**Nodan steps in against an overhead knife attack and adjusts his rising block outward, in order to intercept the swinging arc of the attacker's arm.**

## Formal Middle Block



**Step 1- As the hips rotate, his arm moves naturally.**



**Step 2- The hips are fully rotated (left photo) before blocking arm engages. Nodan maintains an “unbendable arm” as he turns his torso and executes a focused outside forearm block.**

## Middle Block Defense



**Nodan defends against a thrusting knife attack by using an angle step with abbreviated middle block and hook punch to the head.**

## Self-Defense

I first became aware of karate's existence in the early 1960s, when I came across an advertisement in a weightlifting magazine. I was familiar with Western boxing and wrestling, but karate seemed especially well-suited for street defense. After high school, I attended college and joined a traditional Okinawan karate school.

From the beginning, I did not believe the sport karate being practiced in the 1960s was realistic. For me, karate was an exercise in survival, and my main interest was in learning how to apply the techniques to real street situations.

While attending classes at the dojo, I also trained with a college classmate who practiced combat jujitsu. Tex brought a metal training knife to our first session together and succeeded in stabbing me a number of times. Afterwards, I had large red welts all over my body. This convinced me that street defense was different from the traditional instruction I was receiving at the dojo. My formal blocks were too slow, my body was out of position, and I lacked a strategy for defending against a skilled knife fighter.

Tex taught me wrist locks and joint holds that were useful in close quarter situations involving guns and knives. We practiced against the kinds of grabs and holds street criminals were likely to use and against moving knife and club attacks. This early jujitsu training was an important influence on my future approach to the martial arts.

Today, mixed martial arts (MMA) have taken center stage as an entertainment blood sport. At the professional level, world class athletes compete for fame and fortune in heavily promoted cage matches. This latest expression of the martial arts, however, is not self-defense. For example, practical tactics like striking to the eyes and throat, grabbing the groin,

and biting are prohibited in sport. In addition, competitors do not have to defend against armed or multiple attackers, where grappling skills are much less useful.

In order to be effective as self-defense, a martial art cannot be programmed to only respond to competitive sparring techniques. Rather, practitioners must take into account the psychology and predatory nature of street criminals, and then adapt their art to respond to specific kinds of street assaults.

### **Banned from Sport**



**After blocking away the attacker's weapon hand, Nodan uses a double spear hand strike to the eye and throat (see video, "Nodan Dagger Form").**

## **Street defense requires strategy**



**An unseen armed assailant approaches Yohan.**



**As he is grabbed from behind and a knife is held to his throat, Yohan feigns surrender as his right hand prepares to counter.**



**Yohan hooks his fingers over the adversary's wrist, pulls down hard and pins the weapon hand against his chest. Then he reaches back to attack the groin.**



**Yohan grabs the testicles to weaken the attacker and prepares to elbow strike the assailant's jaw.**





**After striking to the jaw, Yohan reaches across and grasps the attacker's weapon arm with both hands.**



**He pivots away while maintaining a firm joint hold on the attacker's wrist and counters with a front kick.**

### The Two-fold Gaze

The “two-fold gaze” of perception and sight enables one to see the big picture and not be distracted by small details or sudden feints. Perceptually, this slows down the adversary’s movements. With a clear mind devoid of anticipation, the opponent’s strength and intention can be perceived.

The two-fold gaze can have an intimidating effect on street thugs because it offers no opening for attack. The saying, “the tiger’s claw has no place to enter,” is an apt metaphor for the gaze’s psychological effect on an aggressor. I once used it to diffuse a road rage incident between a middle aged couple and an overly aggressive young man, who was threatening them. When I stepped in and stood face-to-face with the enraged bully, he became confused and didn’t know how to respond. When I quoted the martial art proverb, “No fight, no blame,” he immediately turned around and hurried back to his car, all the while cursing at us as he went!



**Nodan sees everything simultaneously and does not focus on the details. He perceives his opponent is about to launch an attack.**



**Nodan preemptively counter attacks with a sweeping block.**



**He continues stepping through, prepared to strike.**



**He executes a palm heel thrust to his attacker's jaw.**



**Nodan's palm heel strike breaks the 3 board stack.  
See how his rear leg and spine form a straight line.**

### **Defending against a machete attack**

Every year people are assaulted by a variety of “non-weapons,” such as machetes, hatchets, pitchforks, and baseball bats. Practicing to defend against these kinds of assaults is an essential part of realistic self-defense training.

Defending against a slashing machete attack is similar to confronting an overhead or side arm club assault, in which the weapon is large enough to require a slight “hitch” in the attacker’s swing. (**CAUTION:** This may not apply when facing a skilled knife fighter or swordsman, who has been trained to “wield” rather than “swing” a live blade.)



**Nodan keeps a strategic distance that enables him to move in or out, depending on the movement of his adversary.**



**As the attacker “hitches” his swing to begin his assault, Nodan steps in with his back foot to close the distance.**



**Nodan executes a front kick as he simultaneously blocks assailants’s weapon hand. He follows with a reverse elbow strike to the adversary’s throat.**

## **Defending against a pitchfork attack**



**Nodan takes a position just out of thrusting range.**



**He uses a covering block technique as he begins to spin outside his adversary's line of attack.**



**Nodan continues to spin behind his assailant. The long weapon makes it hard for attacker to turn and counter.**



**Spinning techniques must “move in center,” in order to finish in position for an effective counter attack.**



### **Appearances can be deceiving**

This gun defense from eight feet away seems impossible, which is what makes it effective. The maneuver works using the element of surprise that gives a gunman little time to react without “jerking” the trigger and missing his shot. I have used this technique many times against unsuspecting students and skeptics, who most often “freeze” without pulling the trigger. This defense would only be used in a “do or die” situation where a defender believes the gunman intends to shoot and a zigzag running escape is not a viable option (for example, the defender may be with a companion).

The strategy is to surprise and misdirect, and move one step faster than the gunman’s reaction time. It takes a split second to head feint and move out of the line of fire and only another half second to stride in and block the weapon hand.



**Initially, Nodan raises his hands in “surrender” to give the gunman a false sense of confidence.**



**He head feints, as if moving to his right, in order to take advantage of the elements of surprise and misdirection.**



**Nodan moves to his left and out of the line of fire.**



**He strides in and prepares to block the weapon hand.**



**As Nodan blocks, he avoids the gunman's line of fire.**



**He strikes the gunman's ribcage with a reverse punch.**



**It takes slightly more than 1 second to head feint, traverse the 8 foot distance, and break 3 boards.**

### Side Head Strike Defense



**After raising his hands in “surrender,” Nodan subtly moves his head out of the line of fire and applies a wrist lock. He executes head strike using the 1-2 Timing to “throw” his head sideways.**



This side head strike may not generate enough speed to break more than a single suspended board. But, the greater mass of the head compared to the fist makes this an effective blow. While practicing this maneuver, I once accidentally hit my partner’s face just above his left eye. He dropped to the floor, stunned and disoriented. I did not feel the contact and assumed he was “play acting,” until a large red welt appeared over his eye! The next day his eye was severely blackened. I can only imagine the effect that a fully extended head strike might have on an attacker’s face.

### **Defending against multiple attackers**

Street attacks are fluid and unpredictable, and often require mental flexibility and “on site” adaptations by the defender. In addition, a ferocious fighting spirit and “one strike” power are key factors in successfully defending against multiple attackers, especially if they are carrying weapons.

The self-defense examples portrayed in this book have been staged to show potential applications of “one strike” power. It should be noted, however, that these techniques are not intended to kill or maim an attacker, but rather to stun him long enough to escape or execute a follow up strike. In reality, few martial artists will develop the kind of “one strike” power that can stop a determined or drug-crazed attacker with a single blow.



**Nodan is held and threatened by two opponents. He will feign nonresistance and take advantage of the element of surprise.**



**The sudden force of his punch to one attacker's solar plexus breaks the other assailant's hold.**



**He turns and strikes the second attacker in the jaw.**



**Nodan's first strike was a punch to the solar plexus.**



**In less than a second, he breaks both 3 board stacks.  
In multiple attack situations, speed is of the essence.**



## **The Best Martial Art**

Debates over which is the best martial art should begin with the question, best for what? Ultimately, the best martial art is the one that best addresses **your** needs and goals. Those who seek instruction should research and visit their local schools, because every art has strengths and weaknesses, and good and bad instructors exist in every style.

## **A Practical Self-Defense Alternative**

Few martial artists will develop the striking power to stop a determined attacker with a single blow. Developing “one strike” power requires above average athletic ability, serious makiwara practice, and expertise in The Five Principles.

Unfortunately, long time practitioners who were not trained in the Proper Bone Alignment and 1-2 Timing may find that learning these “new” basics can be a long and arduous task. For others, this kind of instruction may be unavailable, too expensive, or too time consuming.

One practical alternative is to take a self-defense course and carry pepper spray, which is available in handy pocket size containers. This street defense tool is relatively safe, inexpensive, and legal in most countries. As with any weapon system, users should become thoroughly familiar with its proper application. Just as new gun owners go to the range to practice handling and shooting their firearms, those who carry pepper spray should practice arming and discharging live canisters in both indoor and outdoor settings. This is especially relevant when out of doors, because variable wind conditions can make outside use more challenging.

## Black Belt Test

After my “enlightenment” experience in 1985, I stopped training for seven years. I was brought back into karate by two young men, Yohan and Yakov, who requested self-defense lessons. They trained with me without receiving any rank. After five years, they were tested by an independent panel of judges for black belt in “Shotokan Karate Jutsu.”

The test evaluated blocking, kicking, and striking power, along with their performance in two Shotokan black belt katas, Jion and Kanku Dai.

Lastly, they were required to defend against a series of street attacks that included a variety of armed and unarmed assaults. This last phase of testing culminated with free-style sparring against an opponent armed with a knife.

An edited version of their 30 minute black belt test can be seen in the YouTube video, “Nodan Students.”



**Yohan “the bull”**



**Yakov “the hammer”**









**Yakov first raises his hands in “surrender” when a gun is held against his lower back.**



**He spins out of the line of fire, jams the weapon arm against the assailant’s body, and strikes.**

**Free-style sparring against an armed opponent**



**Yohan and Yakov are awarded black belts.**



**After testing, Yohan and Yakov pose with their judges.**



## **YouTube Videos (nodankarate channel)**

### **Nodan Karate (20:01)**

Comprehensive overview of The Five Principles  
and “one strike” street defense applications

### **Nodan Self-Defense (4:07)**

“One strike” self-defense applications against a  
variety of armed and unarmed street assaults

### **Nodan Makiwara (4:52)**

Instructions on building a flexible indoor  
makiwara and board holder from materials  
found at most home improvement centers

### **Who is Nodan? (1:59)**

A short summary of Nodan Karate  
with breaking and self-defense

### **Nodan Five Principles (8:41)**

The Five Principles of centering technique

### **Nodan Teacher (1:23)**

Nodan's most influential karate teacher,  
Quan Li, performs Heian IV and V

### **Nodan Students (3:46)**

Edited version of 30 minute black belt test  
for Nodan's students, Yohan and Yakov

### **Nodan Board Testing (3:51)**

Nodan establishes a uniform standard of  
board strength for breaking experiments

### **Nodan Slow Motion (00:59)**

A number of Nodan's suspended horizontal  
power breaks are viewed in slow motion

### **Nodan Katas (2:44)**

The Five Principles are applied to one  
kata from three different striking arts

### **Nodan Dagger Form (2:19)**

The Five Principles are applied and ten  
defense applications are demonstrated

**website: [nodankarate.org](http://nodankarate.org)**



Lighthouse Productions c. 2016