

NODAN KARATE



The Five Principles

by Nodan

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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!

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Preface

In 1971, I received a black belt in Shorin-ryu karate. After another ten years of training in a variety of throwing and striking arts, I reached the upper limits of my physical ability in karate. I had read about certain adepts who possessed extraordinary psychic power and superhuman strength and began my pursuit of an enlightenment experience that would make me a great master.

During this quest, I trained with an enlightened teacher and engaged in a number of occult practices. Eventually 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 presence when I repented and surrendered my life to Jesus. When I said “yes” to him, I felt the negative energy drain out of me as a warm and wonderful spirit of love poured in from above. I was filled with a sublime peace that cannot be expressed in words

The Nodan Character

In 2004, I began filming my board breaking experiments. My intention was to use these in a dvd that would warn martial artists about the dangers of using the occult to gain superhuman power. At that time, I created the “no dan” (no rank) character as a disguise, in order to protect the identities of certain people associated with my past occult practices. These included my family and friends, along with teachers and martial arts colleagues.

The critics rightly savaged my dvd, calling it cheesy and pointing to the awful acting and poor production values. Adding further insult, my anonymity generated false information about me on the internet, with one website going so far as to post bogus photos of the “real” Nodan!

“Tode” Sakugawa**Nodan**

The Nodan character was inspired by “Tode” Sakugawa (1733-1815) who was the first Okinawan karate teacher. My cultural appropriation of this karate icon was out of respect for the masters who created the profound art.

In 2009, I hired a professional videographer to help me edit videos for the “nodankarate” channel on YouTube. Several years later, I published an account of my occult experiences, but the book failed to effectively communicate my message and has since been discontinued.

In spite of these failures, I have benefitted from remaining unknown, because humility finds a refuge in anonymity. As a make-believe karate master, Nodan is a fitting parody for my misguided quest to gain superhuman power.

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. As such, this method can be applied to any striking art. Throughout the book, a number of street defense scenarios are presented to show how one strike techniques may be applied, because *what we practice is what we will do when faced with a real attack.*

Along with 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. Over time, 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.

Regular makiwara training develops one strike power by building bone and muscle strength. In addition, striking makiwara creates a feeling in the body that cannot be learned from punching the air. (The YouTube video, “Nodan Makiwara,” shows how to construct a flexible indoor makiwara and board holder.)

Flexible Post Makiwara

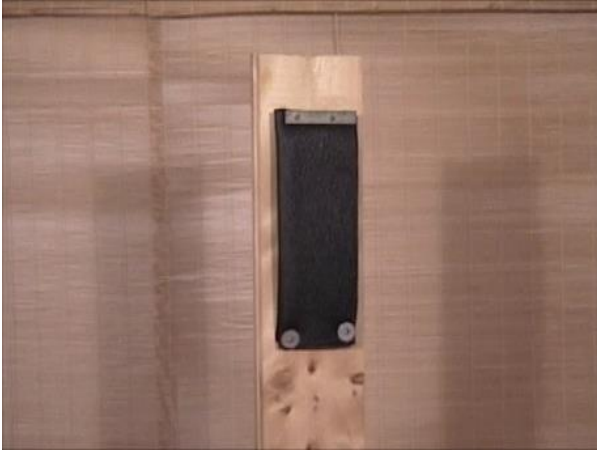


I used a flexible post makiwara for 12 years before filming the breaking experiments.

The Breaking Experiments

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 ability.

Board breaking is relatively meaningless unless there is a standardized method for measuring the strength of the wood. I conducted my breaking experiments using the scientific method, so they can be repeated by following the protocols on pages 12-14. Thus, karateka can measure the power of their striking techniques with an empirically based standard.



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.

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.

5 Board Break with weak side Elbow Strike



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.



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 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



Street Application



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



The “unbendable arm” minimizes power loss through the elbow.

Breaking Protocol

I used un-spaced suspended horizontal board breaking to give tangible evidence of one strike power. This type 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 the suspended bag provides some initial resistance, this is minimal compared to the resistance afforded by using rigid supports.

The resistance of the attacker's body is more akin to the resistance of a 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 attacker who is leaning or moving away.

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 used in breaking competitions and demonstrations because they are relatively easy to break, which makes it possible to stack multiple boards, in order to compare the strengths of a variety of techniques (compare the 7 board bottom fist break on page 9 with the 1 board push break on pages 42-43).

Each breaking experiment used 1x12x10 inch wide white pine boards. Testing revealed that each board could support a minimum of 130 lbs. (59 kg). This weight was determined by placing a loaded barbell across the centerline of the wood running parallel with the grain for one full second.

It is not possible to evaluate the power of board breaking without having a measurable standard for 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. Each board stack was assembled from the same donor board with the grain patterns aligned and facing in the same direction. This causes the boards to break along a fairly straight line, which becomes a factor when the stack is suspended rather than rigidly supported. My heavy bag 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.

Karateka should be aware that adding only one board to an un-spaced stack significantly increases the amount of force required for a successful break. For example, increasing from 3 to 4 boards requires 33% more force.



On average, my test boards could support at least a 130 lb. barbell placed across its centerline for 1 sec. My test boards broke with 135-145 lbs. of weight.



Board strength can be adjusted by changing the width.



This board holder was made from $\frac{3}{4}$ inch plywood and was cut to fit the curvature of the 75 lb. bag. Heavy duty bungee cords were used to attach board holder to suspended bag.

The Strength Factor

Along with their rigorous makiwara practice, traditional Okinawan masters advocated a wide range of strength exercises, including weightlifting. For example, the legendary Kyokushinkai karate master, Mas Oyama, claimed to bench press 175 lbs. up to 500 repetitions per day.

My main barbell lifts were the two hands clean and jerk and the straddle dead lift, which I practiced from both sides. This exercise strengthens the lower back, buttocks, and leg muscles critical to developing the hip rotations that produce one strike power. The straddle dead lift was also said to be a favorite exercise of the martial artist Bruce Lee.

Although I never used steroids and did not develop large muscles, lifting heavy weights for seven years throughout high school and college strengthened my body core. I believe this contributed to my ability to execute the four and five board suspended breaks seen in my videos, especially using my weak side left hand.



In this high school photograph, I perform 300 lb. repetitions using a straddle lift. In college, I could dead lift 3x bodyweight.

The Speed Factor

Hand and foot speed is a function of genetics, flexibility, and thousands of repetitions for each technique. Because flexibility influences speed and quickness, karateka should maintain a stretching routine that works the entire body. The significance of speed for horizontal suspended board breaking is reflected in the following physics formula, in which the velocity (speed) is squared.

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

The importance of speed (Velocity) compared to body weight transfer (Mass), is illustrated in the following breaking attempt, in which Nodan effectively transfers his bodyweight into the board stack. He fails, however, to generate enough speed to overtake the movement of the suspended bag.

7 Board Horizontal Breaking Attempt



Nodan tests the limits of his horizontal striking power with a reverse punch using his strong side right hand.



The force of Nodan's strike is transferred into the 75 lb. bag.

7 Board Bottom Fist Break



Using his weak side left hand, Nodan's downward strike easily generates enough speed to break a 7 board stack. (Also, the use of rigid supports make the break easier.)

Aikido and Kobudo Training



I studied aikido and kobudo (weapons) for several years. Aikido teaches circular movement, unbendable arm, and extension of ki. I have incorporated these precepts into my karate street defense. My younger brother (on right) has studied aikido for more than 25 years.



Aikido is a throwing art designed to control an attacker and cause as little injury as possible.

THE FIVE PRINCIPLES

1st Proper Bone Alignment

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

2nd 1-2 Timing

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

3rd Extension of Ki

Mentally follow through every technique
(the *Follow Through* Principle)

4th Correct Breathing

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

5th Soft and Hard

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

1st Principle: Proper Bone Alignment

Proper 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, a pelvic tilt position must be maintained throughout each 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.



Yakov cannot push Nodan out of a centered stance, because Nodan has re-directed Yakov’s energy downward. Using his leverage advantage, Nodan easily pushes Yakov backwards.

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 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 stop takedown attempt and position himself to execute a downward punch.



Yakov follows up with a downward elbow strike.

Moving in center with spinning step



Nodan raises his hands to give the attacker false confidence. Self-defense strategies include understanding the predatory nature of street crime and utilizing surprise and deception.



Nodan's initial pivot moves him out of the line of fire.



Nodan continues to spin into a centered straddle stance as he traps his adversary's weapon arm.



He counter attacks with a hook punch to the attacker's temple.

Moving in center with cross-step



Nodan uses a fighting stance against a knife threat.



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 3 boards from a weaker cross-chest position, Nodan must momentarily plant both feet in a centered straddle stance before he extends his strike.

Centered Front Thrust Kick



Yakov executes a front kick from a centered stance.



From centered one-leg stance, he uses the 1-2 Timing (2nd Principle) and the bag caroms off his foot. This is what distinguishes a thrust kick from a weaker push.

Fore Fist Bone Alignment

Excessive tension in the muscles, tendons, and ligaments dissipates the transfer of power from the hara (center) to the arms and legs. This is reflected in the 5th Principle, Soft and Hard, in which the body is not entirely tensed before it focuses hard upon impact.

The interosseous membrane connects the two bones in the forearm (the radius and the ulna). Rotating 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 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.



Upon impact, Nodan's fore fist rotates 45 degrees.

2nd Principle: 1-2 Timing

Nodan's hips are 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 martial art styles teach that power is generated through the hips, few schools emphasize this two-step process.



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 separate actions. In addition, the upper body rotation and the extension of the punching arm also move in a 1-2 timing sequence. Students must study this well, because all blocking, striking, and kicking techniques make use of a “1-2 timing” within the 1-2 Timing. This technique has also been described as the “double whip” or “returning wave.”

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 remain down and back as they turn 45 degrees.

The hand moves quicker than the eye and full speed strikes appear as one continuous motion. Therefore, beginners need to consciously separate the two steps within each movement until the 1-2 Timing becomes part of every technique.

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- His 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.

4 Board Break from Crane Stance



Step 1- He turns hips toward the target as striking arm moves naturally and remains relaxed.



Step 2- Nodan's upper body rotates 45 degrees into the target and his striking arm is extended.

Lunging Elbow Strike with 1-2 Timing



**Nodan 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.

Close Hook Punch using the 1-2 Timing



**Nodan is grabbed by the lapels and feigns surrender.
Next, he lowers his arm into a 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.**

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.**

Thrust vs. Push



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



The bag caroms off Yakov's fist like a pinball, because he used 1-2 Timing. This distinguishes a thrust from a push.

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 precept, 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 and upper body rotations, resulting in a push rather than a properly leveraged thrust.

It is noteworthy that the first two principles, Proper Bone Alignment and the 1-2 Timing, are used by athletes to hit a baseball, strike a golf ball, and stroke a tennis ball. Ironically, these 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 principles.

Throwing a baseball uses 1-2 Timing



**Throwing a baseball is similar to throwing a reverse punch.
The hips are rotated before the throwing arm is extended.**

3rd Principle: Extension of Ki (Follow Through)

For the Asian martial arts, ki (chi) is the vital activating life force inherent in all living things. As such, some masters cultivate the ability to channel and project this unseen energy. Today, I prefer to 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 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, Follow Through is emphasized in sports that involve hitting, throwing, and kicking a ball.



Flexible makiwara training develops Follow Through.

Follow Through with Bent Wrist Strike



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



The strike must be 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 pushing will result in a successful break. The challenge is to abruptly thrust against the 1x12x10 inch wide pine board with enough force to penetrate the board before the suspended bag begins to move. This is a zero inch break, because the striking hand is in contact with 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 coordinated 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 the elbow joint. Note that his right arm remains relaxed and that the explosive hip rotation Step 1 of the 1-2 Timing is barely discernible in the photo on the 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. 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 5th Principle, Soft and Hard, in which non-essential muscles remain soft and relaxed, in order to conserve energy and maintain flexibility.

During the push break, his 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, which can give the false impression that the hand has momentarily broken contact.

Follow Through along two vectors

Nodan steps in to jam the overhead knife attack. A simultaneous rising block and palm strike to the jaw gives the opponent 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. The simultaneous rising block with palm strike is representative of the more advanced level of the basic block and counter techniques.

4th 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 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. 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 specially trained to breathe using the diaphragm.

5th Principle: Soft and Hard

Soft and Hard 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 shoulders rotate and the arm is extended into the target, as 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.” This kata features 89 focused movements executed in about 65 seconds, excluding the opening and closing bows.

Soft and Hard street application



WARNING! Wear safety goggles when practicing eye strikes.



Nodan deflects the knife thrust using a bent wrist block.



Using a continuous soft and hard movement, Nodan executes a spear hand strike to the assailant's eye.



He follows up with a continuous motion snapping punch.



His punching hand is snapped back into 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 his 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 kicks 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 greater 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 Defense



Yohan waits for the adversary to begin his assault. The timing is critical in defending against a moving attack.



Yohan kicks the solar plexus while maintaining his center.

Joint Hold with Knee Kick Defense



Against a knife hold up, Yakov applies a joint hold and follows up with a knee kick counter. (The knee kick is an un-extended front kick.)

Low Back Kick Defense



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



From head to heel, Nodan follows through 4 boards.

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



The unbendable arm reduces power loss through the elbow joint.

Downward Block Street Defense



From a 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 rotate.



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 his hips rotate, the 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 a 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.

To be effective as self-defense, a martial art cannot be programmed to only respond to 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.

Street defense requires strategy



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



Although the side head strike lacks enough velocity to break more than a single suspended board, its greater mass makes it an effective strike to an attacker's face.

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.



Nodan moves in as the attacker hitches his swing.



Nodan executes a front kick as he blocks assailant's weapon hand. He follows up with a reverse elbow strike to his adversary's throat.

Defending against a pitchfork attack



Nodan takes a position just out of thrusting range.



He uses a cover block technique as he begins to spin outside his opponent's line of attack.



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



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

Defending against a knife threat



Nodan perceives his opponent is about to attack.



He preemptively moves in with his lead foot and counter attacks with a sweeping block.



He steps through and strikes the opponent's jaw.



His palm heel breaks 3 boards, but thrusting above shoulder level reduces leverage and striking power.

Gun defense from 8 feet away

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 move must be mastered in both directions. It would only be used in a “do or die” situation where the defender believes the gunman intends to shoot, and a zigzag running escape is not a viable option (for example, the defender could have a companion standing on the left or right side).

The strategy is to surprise, 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 gunman a false sense of confidence.



Exploiting surprise and misdirection, he uses a quick head feint, as if moving to his right.



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 Nodan slightly more than 1 second to head feint, traverse the 8 foot distance, and break a 3 board stack.

Defending against multiple attackers

Street attacks are fluid and unpredictable, and often require 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 that these techniques are not intended to kill or maim the 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 assailant with a single blow.



Nodan is held and threatened by two adversaries. He will feign nonresistance to take advantage of surprise and misdirection.



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



He pivots and strikes the second attacker in the jaw.



Nodan's first strike is a hook 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.**

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 their blocking, kicking, and striking power, and 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”

Basics





Street Defense



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.



An unseen armed assailant approaches Yohan from the back.



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, and then reaches back to grab the groin.



Yohan grabs the testicles to weaken his assailant and prepares to elbow strike the attacker'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 attacker's wrist and counters with a front kick.

Sparring against an armed opponent



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 carefully research and visit their local schools, because every art has strengths and weaknesses, and good and bad instructors exist in every style.

Few martial artists will develop the striking power to stop a determined attacker with a single blow. Developing “one strike” power requires above average strength and athletic ability, serious makiwara practice, and expertise in The Five Principles. Karateka who were not trained in the Proper Bone Alignment and 1-2 Timing may find that relearning these “new” basics can be a difficult task. For others, this training 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 must become familiar with its proper use and application. Just as new gun owners 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 important for outdoor applications, because variable wind conditions can make use unpredictable.

YouTube Videos

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

Who is Nodan? (1:59)

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

Nodan Five Principles (8:41)

Summary of The Five Principles

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 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



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