

Chapter 1

The Phonetics of Karate

Synchronization, *Kime* and *Sae*

Fundamentals

- 1.1: *Me-sen* (Leading), Eye Vector
- 1.2: *Ibuki* / Contraction
- 1.3: *Tan-den*
- 1.4: ballistic Swing
- 1.5: *Fumi-komi*, Rebound Momentum
- 1.6: *Fumi-komi* forward
- 1.7: *Zan-shin*, Sustain and Coordination of *Ibuki* and *Kime*

Preview: In this chapter we will cover the basic principles that govern the effectiveness of any karate technique. What distinguishes *karate* from other martial arts is that *karate* technique is always backed up by the entire body so that the technique will have maximum effect. If the entire body does not support the technique, it is not *karate*. Therefore the power of *karate* technique comes from the perfectly timed contraction of the entire body at the same instant of impact, which is called *kime* 極(key-meh).

When the action of *karate* techniques is synchronized and terminated exactly at the same time, it is called *kime*, the intense focusing of the mind and body into a single searing moment of impact with the target. The ability to perform effective *kime* will result in the creation of shock into one's opponent, which makes it impossible for the opponent to continue. Therefore, you will learn about ***kime*, which is at the core of karate.**

In general, *karate* techniques are synchronization of *ki* (mental energy), *ken* (fist or sometimes the leg) and *tai* (body). Throughout this chapter, you will learn the most important rules for the fundamentals of *karate*. Make them a part of your body so that you can use them naturally.

1.1: Me-sen, (meh-sen) Eye Vector

Objective: You will learn how to sustain the *tsuki*, (punch) with your eyes to create a one-blow finishing.

You will learn where to look when performing a punch.

目線 *Me-sen* (may-sen) is eye vector, which is important as a fundamental component of karate for delivering shocking power into the target.

1.1.1: The first attempt

You will use a drill we call unbendable arm in order to discover the mechanics behind *me-sen*. Proper *me-sen* will increase your *ki*, the details of which will be explained in chapters ten and eleven.



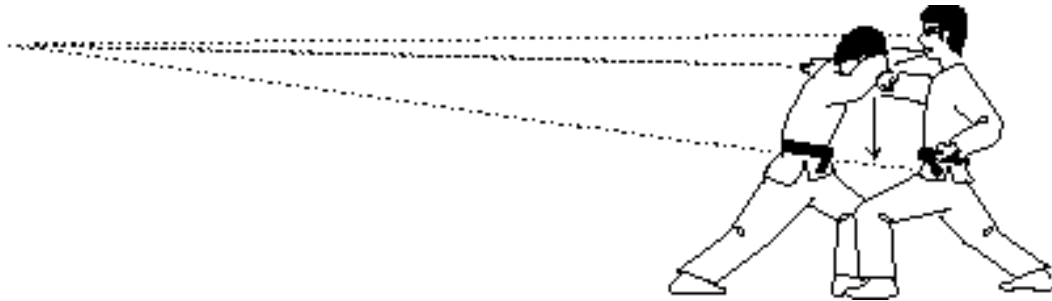
1. Place the wrist of your right arm on someone's shoulder.
2. Look at your hand as it rests on his shoulder.
3. Let him try to bend your arm with both of his arms on your elbow. Allow him to gradually increase his power to maximum.



4. As a result of this experiment, you will find that you cannot prevent him from bending your arm.
5. Unless you are a very strong person compared to your partner, you will find that you cannot prevent him/her from bending your arm.

1.1.2: The Second Attempt

1. After this first attempt, pick a spot along the vector of your arm but beyond your hand and at a much further distance.
2. Concentrate your eyes on this spot and push your elbow and your stomach toward it. Visualize yourself touching the spot.
3. Press firmly with your right wrist on his shoulder.
4. Again, let him try to bend your arm.
5. Even after he tries to bend your arm, continue pushing for a while and continue to focus your mind on that spot. This continuous mental concentration is called *zan-shin*. (Refer to the following section of this chapter, for an explanation of *zan-shin*).



Question: What did you learn from this experiment?

Rule 1.1: The Principle of Vectors

From a point of origin to a final position, a vector is a direction or course that a particular force or velocity will take or takes. While training *karate*, you should imagine that your eyes have a vector; the point of origin starting with the eyes themselves and extending off into the distance. Similarly, your technique has a vector extending from its point of contact, off into the distance. You should also imagine a vector extending from your *tan-den* (Refer to the following lesson). When you punch, your eye vector should meet with the arm vector and *tan-den* vector at a distance of approximately a hundred feet. In short, don't look directly at your target; rather, look through your target and imagine that the vector of the technique, the vector of your *tan-den*, and the eye vector intersect a hundred feet away.

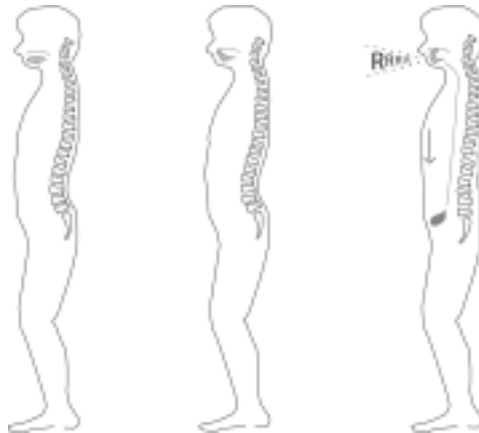
*Eye Vector

When you punch, your eye vector should meet with the arm vector at a distance of 100 feet.

1.2: "R" *Ibuki* 息吹 (ih-boo-kee) Contraction Method:

Objective: So that you will create strong karate technique, you will learn how to initiate the internal contraction of your body by using the tongue's position to create an "R" sound during exhalation.

1.2.1: Sound



Sound out "ah" "eh" "ee" "oh" "oo."
Think about which part of your stomach is responding when you make any one of the above sounds. When you sound out "ah," you will feel tension in a fairly high part of the abdomen; and when you sound "oo," you will feel tension in the lowest abdominal region.

In addition to the importance of speed of contraction, because you get the strongest contraction from the "oo" sound, it is the most preferable sound to make for effective *ibuki*.

You will feel when you sound out "ah" fairly high part of stomach is responding and "oo" is the lowest.

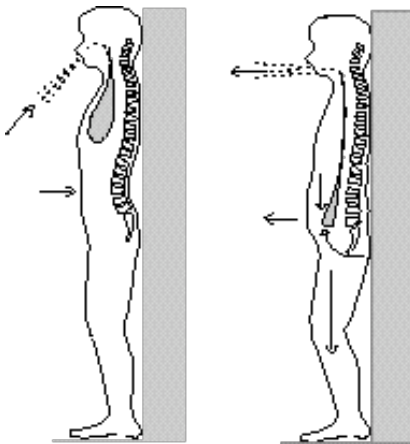
1. Stand with your back to a wall. Contract your thighs by tilting your pelvis up and slightly bending your knees.
2. Push the roof of the mouth with the tip of your tongue. Pull your chin towards your stomach. At the same time, concentrate on an area inside your lower abdomen that responds to the feeling created by the tongue's pressure to the roof of the mouth.
3. Touch the tongue to the roof of your mouth and push against that spot* and sound out "R," opening your mouth slightly. If you cannot feel the spot, just say "OO-OO-OO."
4. As you exhale harder sounding out "R," push the small of the back to the wall.
5. Press down to the floor and bend the knees lower and flatten your back against the wall.

1.3: *Tan-den* 丹田 Contraction (contracting of the Small of the Back for *Kime*)

Objective: How to contract your body.

The contraction of the small of the back, the lower abdomen, and buttocks are the first primary muscles used in karate.

To exhale properly is to perform *ibuki* 息吹 (ih-boo-kee), which is the forceful exhale of air out from the bottom of your stomach (*tan-den*) that helps you to lock the abdominal and back muscles. The contraction of the back and abdominal muscles is vital for effective *kime* 極. You must not neglect the exhale, *ibuki*.



1. Sniff in air through your nose up to the chest, making sure not to inhale deep. (Remember you will not use the nose later.) As you sound out "R" as in former practice, press lumbar 5 to the wall, then press 4, 3, 2, 1 to the floor and squeeze the gluteus maximus muscles with maximum tension.
2. Pull your sacrum (tailbone) upward and try to push the solar plexus against it.
3. Make sure that the small of your back makes contact with the wall so that your back is flat and press into the floor by bending the knees (a little only to add momentum to the body).

*Sniff air in (up to your chest, not any deeper). Forcefully exhale all air and sound out "R R R R." Scroll the tip of your tongue and pull *tan-den* hard. As a result you will contract the back and pull the thigh. When the small of your back contacts the wall, stop there. If you pull more, your stomach contraction will become weak and cannot perform a symmetrical contraction. (This will be explained later.)

For the technique to be effective, all action in the arm (in the punch) and the small of the back should be finished at the same time. Naturally, the small of the back contraction can finish far faster than the arm action. But, by trying to make both actions end at the same time, you will make your punch far faster. Use this principle for the next lesson.

*More drills and discussion of *kime* follow.

You do not run faster moving your legs faster. Instead if you swing your arms faster, you run faster automatically.

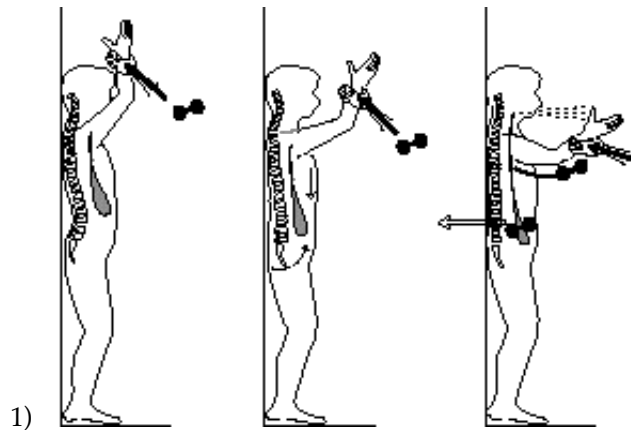
Rule 1.2 Speed and *ibuki* 息吹 **

The stronger the *ibuki*, the stronger the technique will be. The shorter the *ibuki*, the sharper the technique will be. When you want to punch faster, do not think about punching faster, but rather try to exhale shorter. (Often, if you think about punching faster, you will tighten your muscles and actually make the punch slower.)

1.4: Ballistic Arm Action, *Sae* 冴え (sharpness) Isolated Use of Muscles

Objective: In the following exercises, you will gain experience in utilizing muscles necessary for an action and will learn how not to involve unnecessary muscles.

1.4.1: Pushing the Triceps with the Small of the Back.



When you punch, you use triceps as an extensor at the end of the action. But the biceps, the flexor, act as brakes and will slow the action. So you have to learn how to use the triceps independently and not to activate the biceps so as to reduce their interference. (In actual punching practice, some kinds of punches have to use biceps at the beginning.)

* Stand with your back against the wall. Push the small of your back against the wall and from the small of the back push the triceps and push someone who is holding your arms up forward. Make sure that while you are performing this exercise that you do not use the biceps at all.

1.4.2: Unbendable arm by isolated use of triceps.



Let someone try to bend your arm. But this time do not use the *me-sen* concentration power.

If you fight back against your opponent, your biceps come in to action, and the biceps will counter the contraction of the triceps making the triceps ineffective at resisting. So just keep extending the triceps to infinity.

1.4.3: Isolated use of the Triceps to Free your Seized Hand



This isolated use of triceps may prove helpful in getting your hand free from someone who grasps you.

1. He grips your right wrist with is both hands

You make a fist with your right hand.



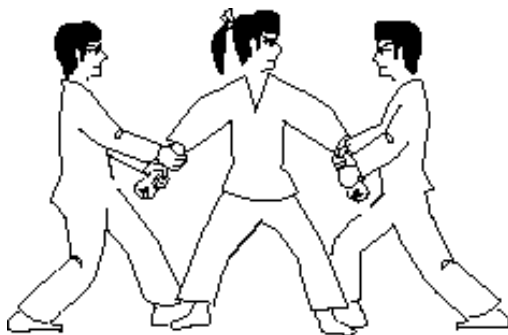
2. Without bending the elbow, place all your weight on it.

3. Open the hand wide and at the same time push your triceps hard straight downward by your *tan-den*.



4. Shift the elbow of your seized arm between and in the center of his arms for leverage.

1.4.4: Isolated Use of Triceps When Grasped by Each Arm



1. If you are seized from both sides, imagine that one of the aggressors is a post to help you. In order to secure leverage against one of the opponent, pull the second opponent downward to execute the movement of the former exercise explained in drill #3.



2. Then, focus your attention to the arm you intend to free and push the arm down while twisting it out of his grip.