

Against the Kick

By Allen C. Lieu

Martial artists prepare themselves mentally and physically when they see their opponent getting ready to attack. Your hands instinctively come up and the body prepares. You are ready to block, deflect and counter the oncoming attack. When an attacker tries to kick you, you have moments to decide your course of action. Where and how do you block a kick? Do you strike to counter the attack? Do you throw the person off of their kick? If you are on the receiving end of a kick attack and fail to meet or avoid your opponent's kick, the result can end in lethal consequences. Kick attacks are devastating and can be used to hurt or knock opponents out. Knowing techniques that can effectively counter kick attacks can turn the tide on an aggressor and you may deliver the final knockout blow. In Hapkido, we use effective counter techniques to turn the outcome in the defender's favor.

Jang Mu Won Hapkido, founded by the late Grandmaster Chong Sung Kim, redefines kick attack defense. Using various counters to kick attacks is important in Jang Mu Won Hapkido. Jang Mu Won Hapkido uses strikes, pressure points, twisting and throwing to disable an attacker. Grandmaster Dr. Chong Sung Kim is recognized as one of the world's foremost instructors and practitioners in the Korean martial art of Hapkido. Grandmaster Kim's teaching style incorporates an emphasis on timing and precision in the execution of Hapkido techniques.



Types of Hapkido Kick Attacks

Striking is often employed to weaken an opponent and used as a means to disable an attacker. However this notion can be countered. Martial artists use their hands and feet to attack vital points on the body to inflict serious damage. A front kick is designed to push an opponent back and can be used to kick all sections of the body. The front kick, utilizing the ball of the foot as the point of impact, can have an overwhelming effect. This was recently showcased in the UFC 126 fight between Silva and Belfor, when Silva landed a properly placed front kick to the side of Belfor's head, which resulted in a knockout. Hapkido utilizes the front kick as a way to back an opponent away. When the knee is brought up to the waist level, the kicker can disguise their kick from the same movement. Certain movements, such as twisting the body, moving the pivot leg, and dropping the hands can signal what type of kick is coming.

Hapkido also uses mid-range kicks such as the side kick, the roundhouse kick and the heel drop kick. We also use the back kick, which is similar to a turning side kick. These kicks can effectively end a fight. A side kick can jam an opponent's hip, which prevents them

from fully executing a kick attack. A properly placed side kick can also take the air out of an opponent. The side kick uses the blade of the foot as the striking point of the kick. The power of the kick is driven from the hips and the pivot foot, which can target different areas of the body (ranging from the knees to the face). The roundhouse kick is designed to hit a target's face, mid-section and lower body. The roundhouse kick uses the top part of the foot, and has different variations on how to strike. Some practitioners prefer to use the ball of their foot while others use the top part of the foot. A roundhouse kick to the lower body can take an opponent out of a fight. The heel drop kick (similar to the axe kick in TKD) can be used to strike an opponent in the shoulder area as well as the top of the head. The heel drop kick is used to finish an opponent once they are on the ground. The heel drop kick utilizes the heel as the striking point to vital points of the body. Knowing how a kick functions is essential to learning how to defend against various kick attacks.

Hapkido Defensive Counters

Timing, precision and knowing how to use an opponent's energy against their attack are important to counter their kick attack. The defender must be aware of the defensive stance

Master Han W. Kim baits the attacker, Allen C. Lieu by opening up his mid-section.

As the attacker throws a front kick, the defender blocks with the front hand...



Front Kick Defense

(form) they are in. The techniques vary depending on which stance the defender chooses as well as the attacker. When using striking to counter a kick, the strike must land in a targeted area. Striking the shoulder area is not as effective as striking an opponent to the face or groin area. If you punch far away from the attacker, you leave yourself open for further attack. If you are too close and you try to punch your attacker, your strike may not be effective and you may find yourself a victim of a takedown. Knowing the distance between a strike and when to strike is essential to counter an attack. A strike may cause temporary disorientation for the aggressor but striking doesn't necessarily end a fight. However, a takedown off of a kick attack can cause a more devastating effect. Taking an aggressor down is not as easy as it seems. Hapkido uses takedown techniques such as twisting and throwing to end any type of conflict. If an opponent has proper balance through a fight, the advantage is equal between the defender and attacker. In Hapkido, it is important to break the opponent's balance in order to defend yourself.

In order to learn how to take down an opponent, you must be able to read the opponent's body language. Observe the distance between the aggressor's kick and your body. Their kick will vary depending on their distance from you. The defender can deceive their aggressor

by bringing the arm up to entice the kick to a certain target area. If the defender brings their arm up to expose the rib area, the aggressor may see a potential target to hit. As a result, the defender has taken the first step to execute a takedown. If the defender knows that a kick attack is coming, the defender can place their hands accordingly for defense.

Instead of exerting vast amounts of energy to outmuscle an opponent, a practitioner is able to use their opponent's energy to cause them to fall. Hapkido employs the three principles that are showcased in execution of each technique. The three principles are the water principle, the circle principle and the harmony principle. With the water principle, the techniques are designed to flow. Water is able to adapt to any situation and is free flowing. In Hapkido, techniques are designed to flow and adapt to the opponent. The circle principle creates the opportunity to throw the opponent off balance. The primary concept of the harmony principle is to bring together the water and circle principle. The techniques are smooth and fluid. The practitioner is able to throw with relative ease in the techniques without overexerting themselves during the duration of the techniques.

while hooking the rear hand underneath the attacker's leg.



The defender slides in with his leg to take the attacker's position and uses his front leg to sweep the attacker's base leg. This causes the attacker to lose balance and fall.



After taking down the attacker, the defender grabs the foot and applies pressure for the finish.



Front Kick Defense

A person who uses the front kick will kick to different areas of the body. The defender must adapt to the situation. If the attacker kicks lower than anticipated, the defender can change their block to meet their defensive needs. As the front kick comes in for an attack, the defender has the option of choosing which side of the leg to go to. Moving out to either side can expose the attacker for a strike and can make them vulnerable to a takedown technique. By blocking the kick and committing to one side, the defender can use a series of strikes (such as punches, the backhand and elbows) to strike their attacker. The defender also has the same options when executing a takedown.

When the attacker kicks with a front kick, the defender can shift their body to the left side of the kick. At the same time, the front hand becomes the blocking hand, while the other hand traps the kicking leg. From this position, the defender must shift their base leg to the attacker's leg. From here, the defender can use a front sweep to the attacker's leg, which will disrupt the attacker's balance. This will cause the attacker to fall on their shoulder. After the technique is executed, the defender can apply pressure to the attacker's foot.

Techniques will vary depending on which side is chosen. Utilizing the right side of the attacker, the defender can step to the right, block with the right hand and trap their aggres-

sor's kicking leg with the left hand. Using the right hand, the defender can grab the shoulder and throw their attacker by taking a right step back (in a circular motion) while lifting the defender's left arm up. This will cause the aggressor to fall on their shoulder and can potentially end the conflict.

Side Kick Defense

To defend against a side kick, the defender must be aware of where the kick is coming. Depending on if the kick is low or high, the defender can adjust their technique. Timing is very important to defending against a side kick. After the side kick is initiated by the attacker, the defender can move in to the kick, thus minimizing the attacker's ability to fully extend their side kick. A simple defensive technique is to block with the front hand in a circular motion, and punch with the rear hand. The strike may be effective but the take down technique can disable your opponent. By using the same block, multiple techniques can be executed.

The defender, exposing the rib area for the attacker to target, can block with the front hand and shift their balance to the left. The rear hand will grab over the attacker's leg and by using the attacker's energy, the defender can execute a front leg sweep (in front of the top part of the knee), causing the opponent to flip over their own body. It is important that the front sweep

As the attacker, Jean Poucholuen, throws a side kick, Master Han W. Kim uses his front hand to block and the rear hand to grab over.

Side Kick Defense



lifts the attacker's base leg off the ground. After the throw, the defender can strike to a vital area on the attacker.

The takedown technique starts with a basic block. The front hand will shift over to the back of the knee and at the same time, the rear hand will grab over the leg. From here the defender steps in with their front leg and using a circular motion, pushes downwards with the lead blocking hand. Being stationary does not help with the takedown technique. By sliding in with both legs (essentially taking the opponent's spot), the technique becomes easier to execute because the opponent is off balance.

The Finish

After taking down an attacker, it is important to finish the opponent. A strike will inflict pain to potentially cause an opponent not to retaliate. If a strike fails to stun an opponent, the next option is the takedown technique, whether it is twisting or throwing. After executing a takedown technique, it is important to continue to apply the pressure on the opponent. The defender can apply different amounts of force to various pressure points on the attacker's body. Applying heavy force to a pressure point will result in sharp pain and could disable the attacker. A more definitive finish can result in

breaking an attacker's bone, which will immobilize the opponent from using that arm or leg to attack. In Hapkido, we are taught to finish the attacker if the situation permits.

The techniques mentioned in this article are just a small glimpse into Hapkido's kick defense. Jang Mu Won Hapkido has different types of kick defense techniques that are taught throughout the official curriculum. Defensive counters to kick attacks include striking, twisting and throwing. Each technique is designed to effectively disable an opponent so that the defender comes out on top. If a conflict escalates to the point where force needs to be used, it is important to remember your self-defense training. Defense against kick attacks are essential in order to learn proper self-defense techniques. **TKD**

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Using the attacker's energy, the defender rotates with his right leg in a circular motion.



Utilizing a front sweep to the front of the attacker's base leg, the defender will cause the attacker to flip over and land on their back.



The finish results in an ankle lock with pressure being exerted on the attacker's ankle.

