Martial Arts Training - Your Legs are Weapons by Paul Halme

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Unfortunately today you hear about quite a few people getting attacked. If you ever find yourself or those you care about in a situation where you are being threatened it can be crucial to have some form of self defense training. It can virtually be a matter of life or death.

There are many varieties of self defense and martial arts. Karate is the most widely spread and in my opinion easiest to start learning and most family friendly of all the martial arts. Karate training should be followed under guidance of an instructor face to face in a local club, here are some of the kicking techniques you would learn.

Front Snap Kick

The front snap kick is amongst the least difficult karate kicks, often together with the front thrust kick one of the first kicks a karate ka learns. It is able to function as a distraction way to allow you to close the distance between you and an opponent to then follow through with additional techniques, or is the most crippling, when applied to an opponent's groin for example.

Delivery of Front Snap Kick

When performing a front snap kick, bend the toes upwards to strike using the ball of the foot, kick while keeping the leg relaxed and snap the kick in a flicking way almost like whipping with a towel.

To perform a front snap kick you have to:

Start in a short stance with your legs shoulder width apart, one leg forward a shoulder width.

Bring the front foot up so that the thigh is parallel to the floor.

Quickly extend the kicking leg to 90% extension in a flicking way to strike your opponent - you should not extend fully because this can result in knee injury.

Snap the kicking foot returning to the previous position with thigh parallel to the floor.

Return kicking foot to original position in short stance.

Ideal Targets Areas For A Front Snap Kick

A front snap kick may very well be the weakest of it all kicks as it is delivered with a flick as an alternative to a thrust, but should be delivered very rapidly and could often take an opponent unawares, getting through their guard.

The front snap kick can be used to target any area along the center line of an opponent, such as stomach, throat, nose or coccyx, however this kick is ideal when targeted towards an opponent's groin. If delivered effectively in a self protection situation strike, it might be the only action required.

Front Thrust Kick

Just like the front snap kick, the front thrust kick is often among the first kicks learned. When delivered at full power it is quite hard to defend against, commonly the front thrust kick will come

crashing through an opponent's defense as a result of the power it is delivered with.

Delivery of Front Thrust Kick

When carrying out a front thrust kick bend the toes upwards to strike using the ball of your foot. Keep the supporting leg bent and stay at similar height to be able to drive forwards using the full force and not lose it through vertical movements.

To deliver a front thrust kick you need to:

Start in a long stance with legs a shoulder width apart, one leg back two shoulder widths, front leg bent.

Keeping the front leg bent, bring the rear foot up and forwards so the thigh is parallel with the ground.

Drive the kicking leg out towards the target, while rotating the waist the same way as the kicking leg.

Aim for 6 inches at the rear of target, so if applied to an opponent's stomach you should be aiming to pass through to their back.

After impact withdraw the foot once again to the previous position with the thigh parallel to the ground.

Return the foot back to the starting place in long stance.

Ideal Targets Areas For A Front Thrust Kick

As a result of the power used, a front thrust kick is most appropriate delivered to the center line of an adversary, front, side or back. Some common target areas are:

Stomach

Face

Ribs

Spine

This is most often used head on to an opponent, driving a foot into their stomach, bringing their guard and head down enabling you to follow up with strikes to their head.

Side Kick

A side kick is often performed after a side step of an opponent or when you're approached from the side.

Delivery of Side Kick

The big toe ought to be curled up with the other toes pointing downward, this shapes the foot exposing the blade (side of the sole). When striking use the rear third of the blade of the foot (side of the sole towards the heel), this permits you to get maximum twist of your hips and it is the strongest piece of the foot.

To deliver a side kick you should:

Start with your feet in line and apart by 1 to 2 shoulder widths.

Keeping you supporting leg bent, draw the front foot back in towards your rear knee.

Thrust the kicking leg out sideways again to 90% extension striking using the rear portion of the blade of the foot - over extension can cause groin injury

Withdraw the kicking foot to the supporting knee.

Reposition the kicking foot so you are back in your starting stance again.

While doing a side kick ensure to stay at the same height and not raise up while kicking, you can do this by keeping the supporting leg bent, which also aids in balance.

Ideal Targets Areas For A Front Thrust Kick

A correctly performed side kick is a very effective attack common target areas are:

Face

Neck

Throat

Ribs

Stomach

A great way to employ aside kick is from a side step of the opponent in one direction, accompanied with a side kick back in the opposite direction, driving down through the side of their knee, snapping it and ending their attack.

Back Kick

A back kick is utilized when approached by an attacker coming from the rear

Delivery of Back Kick

When striking with a back kick point the toes upwards and make contact by using the heel of the foot, while keeping the supporting leg bent for optimum force and balance.

To deliver a back kick you need to:

Start in a short stance with legs one shoulder width apart with one leg one shoulder width in front of the other.

Draw the back leg up in front of your body, bringing your knee up towards chest height with toes bent upwards.

Twist the hips and drive the foot backwards extending 90%, striking with the heel of the foot - over extension can cause groin injury.

Draw the leg back in front of you with knee up high again.

Return kicking foot to starting point short stance.

Ideal Targets Areas For A Back Kick

Just like a front thrust kick, a Back kick is very powerful and difficult to guard against, some prime target areas are:

Shins

Groin

Stomach

Face

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