

Informal Partner Exercises

General Principles

Informal partner exercises are used to condition the striking and blocking surfaces of the body, improve our ability to regulate speed and power, and refine our sense of timing and distance.

Important safety guidelines:

- ALWAYS start light, then build up speed and power; remember that adrenaline unconsciously speeds you up
- Lower rank attacks first
- Lower rank (and/or the smaller person) sets the pace and power
- Contract muscles – including the hara – at the point of impact, then relax in-between
- Control the amount of force given by pulling the technique short vs. following through at the point of impact
- Minimize the amount of force received by allowing the arm to give way (then move it back into position)
- Work both left and right sides evenly
- Avoid bruising by NOT striking to the same spot with each repetition
- After training with arm contact, finish with hand squeezing exercises to restore circulation to the forearms

Tanren Kumite (Arm Training)

Arm Training 1 (3-Point Arm Training) – Used to condition the top, inner, and outer sides of the forearms for blocking. Work proper zenkutsu dachi while shifting side to side.

Arm Training 2 – Keep the pace slow to emphasize maximum contraction of the muscles on impact and *complete* relaxation in-between. Do not “block” the initial punch as it is being thrown; let your partner “lock it out”, then block.

High/Low - Build up gradually to maximum speed, even if the technique becomes sloppy. Emphasis is on developing reflexes and endurance.

Partner Kihon (Basics with a Partner)

Partner kihon exercises can be created with any complementary attack/block moves from basics or kata. They give students an opportunity to practice multiple repetitions of a single technique, both offensive and defensive.

Best practices:

- Blocks are performed moving *backward*
- *Advanced students*: blocks are performed moving *forward*, attacker resets before each count so as to step forward into the attack; or, defender blocks moving to the side and backward at approximately a 45 degree angle, using body-shifting technique (tenshin)

General Comments

- Avoid clashes by working proper ma-ai (distance)
- Develop forearm-to-forearm contact, staying away from wrists and elbows.
- Attacks are made to where the defender is *currently* positioned, *not* their final position
- Defender responds to the attacker’s movement, not the instructor’s count

Informal Partner Exercises

Mawashi Geri (Roundhouse Kick)

Face your partner in shizentai dachi, start with left foot forward, hands in “passive stance.” Students alternate delivering the following techniques with the instep (inner-top) of the rear foot:

- 1. kick/sweep to outer calf
- 2. kick to outer thigh
- 3. kick/sweep to calf then thigh, re-chambering the foot in-between (do not step back onto the floor)
- 4. kick to the latissimus (lat) muscle, just below the scapula (avoid the small ribs and kidneys)
- *Advanced students:* 5. kick/sweep to the calf, thigh and/or lat, re-chambering the foot in-between each strike

General Comments

- Make contact only with your partner’s large muscle groups. Watch out for joints and bones!
- Emphasize balance and hitting the target
- Communicate: if you can’t reach the lat, ask your partner to squat; if you don’t have clear access to the calf, thigh or lat, ask your partner to offer the target by rotating towards you.

Yoko Geri (Side Kick) and Ushiro Geri (Back Kick)

Same setup as above, except defender/receiver offers the forearm at approximately chest height as a target.

- Sweep the forearm in a downward direction using the arch of the foot.
- Follow up immediately with a side kick to the receiver’s abdomen area (amount of contact determined by the receiver). Do not chamber the foot before delivering the side kick.
- *Advanced students:* Same setup as above. Attacker steps forward after forearm sweep, turns about-face, and kicks backward using the forward foot, return the kick to the chamber, show balance, then rapidly step forward or back and turn about-face to end up facing partner. Defender: as attacker steps forward and turns, step back into jigotai dachi and offer shuto hands, palms facing out, as a target for your partner; Reset.

Yakusoku Kumite (Prearranged Fighting) Plus 1

- Attacker’s role is unchanged
- Defender follows up each standard block or strike with any Shorin-Ryu offensive technique
- The “plus 1” counter should be executed immediately and without thought (but with control); analyze its effectiveness after the fact
- Defender “resets” (returns to the previous standard position for that count) after each “plus 1” move
- Emphasis is on developing conditioned reflexes for counterattacks
- Begin and end the series with a round of traditional yakusoku kumite

Kihon Ippon Kumite (Basic One-Step Sparring)

- Attacker executes any single Shorin-Ryu technique to any target (no contact)
- Defender blocks or evades the attack and immediately counters (no contact) utilizing a Shorin-Ryu technique
- Partners take turns, alternating between attacker and defender (use appropriate caution, it’s easy to lose track of whose turn it is!)
- Emphasis is on improving reflexes, footwork and positioning, finding openings for counterattacks, and managing adrenaline.