

# Traditional Body-Conditioning

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## General Guidelines

Traditional body-conditioning exercises are incorporated into the curriculum as supplements to kata, kihon and partner exercises.

- Time constraints make it impossible to include pushups, knee bends, stomach exercises, and weight training in every class. Add exercises on your own to make up for those missed during formal classes.
- Always emphasize quality (doing the exercise properly) over quantity. Set a goal of 10 perfect repetitions, then evaluate your capacity for completing another set.
- Beginner students or students with injuries should modify all exercises as needed and inform their instructor accordingly.
- Body-conditioning exercises strengthen and stabilize the joints and surrounding muscles and tendons in preparation for the safe and effective implementation of atemi (striking with concentrated destructive power).

## Pushups

- Knuckle pushups: keep the weight on the index and middle finger knuckles, fist tight, wrist straight and hands in line with the shoulders or arm pits. White belts with no tips should do pushups on the mat, not the wooden deck, allowing callouses to form gradually.
- Fingertip pushups: performed with finger joints bent (claw-like), *not* hyperextended.
- Modify by dropping to the knees (in line with the hips), switching to the palms of the hands, and/or decreasing range of motion. Try not to simply hold the “up” position for the duration of the exercise.
- Always follow pushups with a minimum of 30 squat punches.
- Used to gradually prepare the knuckles and arm joints for makiwara training.
- Build up slowly; there is no rush! Injury will slow your progress in the long run.

## Leg Exercises

For the traditional leg-work series refer to the Soku/Foot Foundation section of *Building Warrior Spirit* (pages 50-52).

- Prep the legs for deep knee bends by bringing the knee to the chest then executing a series of light kicks. Show full range of motion, work balance, and kick for height.
- Maximum of 100 deep knee bends, bottoming out (no bouncing). White belts and injured deshi can do half squats or skip counts. Always perform at least 20 kicks immediately after knee bends, followed by stretching and light bouncing in place.
- When stretching/squatting side-to-side, lower ranks or injured deshi should support part of their weight with their hands.

## Stomach Exercises

For the traditional stomach-work series refer to the Tanden/Spirit section of *Building Warrior Spirit* (pages 70-72).

- Always stretch hands and feet to opposite walls before and after each set of leg raises, stomach crunches, and neck exercises.
- Focus on keeping the back flat on the deck and/or supported with the hands under the buttocks.
- Perform enough repetitions to feel a burning sensation in the stomach.
- Practice proper abdominal breathing: out on contraction/exertion, in on relaxation. Never hold the breath.

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## Weight Training

Use light weights to provide additional resistance to strengthen specific muscles associated with a single technique or kata.

- Select a weight that allows you to perform the exercise without compromising form.
- Perform 10 repetitions of the basic move (or one repetition of the kata) at half speed and power or with light snap (careful to avoid injury).
- Follow each weight training exercise with the same technique or kata performed with snap without the weights. Students should experience significant gains in speed.
- Work both left and right sides evenly.
- Proper breathing is essential to all weight training: if working *weights only*, exhale while tensing muscles, inhale while relaxing muscles; if working *karate techniques* inhale on blocks and exhale on punches.
- Relax between movements; keep shoulders down; straighten arms *fully* during extensions.
- Ask a Black Belt for instruction on how to use weight-training equipment: hand weights (one to five pounds), chichi (one-sided dumbbell), ankle weights, kame jars (ceramic jars), or tetsu geta (iron sandals).
- Avoid heavy weights as these distort form and lead to excess muscle mass that slows down techniques.

Chishi (one-sided dumbbell) - The chishi is a traditional Okinawan dumbbell with a weight mounted on the end of a foot-long handle used to strengthen the wrist, shoulder, and lat muscles. Chishi exercises are typically not meant to resemble karate techniques. Rather, they are a series of rotating movements designed to develop arm and wrist strength.

- Select a weight that can be held up at arm's length without causing strain.
- Hold the chishi close to the end of the handle (or modify by choking up on handle).
- Keep the weight shoulder height or above; do not drop to the waist.
- Stand in jigotai dachi (squatting stance) with the resting hand on the hip.
- Perform 10 repetitions with your strong side (right or left) then 10 with your weaker side.

- Chishi series:

- (1) Start with the fist in the pocket, chishi facing upward. Extend the arm forward and backwards 10 times right then 10 times left, working triceps and biceps.
- (2) Start with arm extended forward. Point the chishi forward (working wrist) then swing *counter-clockwise* up and over the head (working deltoid). Pause for one second, then slowly lower to starting position (working lats). Follow with the same motion, except swinging the chishi *clockwise* up and over the head. 10 repetitions total alternating counter-clockwise and clockwise.
- (3) Start with arm extended out to one side (as in chasing punch). Repeat swinging/lowering motion from series (2).
- (4) Same series as (1) only start with chishi facing outward, rotate the wrist 180 degrees, as in a punch, working wrist.
- (5) Arm extended forward, roll the chishi in a figure eight motion, working wrist.