

UNITING THE WORLD THROUGH **MARTIAL ARTS**

# TKD *TaeKwonDo* **TIMES**

MAY 2014

PART 1 OF OUR SPECIAL 50-STATE COVERAGE

## TKD STATE BY STATE

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# Training to Punch: Hit, Stick, and Grind

by Master Terry Wisniewski

**A**lways check with a doctor before taking any training advice. Any type of impact training without proper supervision can be dangerous. Always stop any activity that causes you pain and see a doctor. Find a local expert to monitor your progress.

One of the first moves in any of the striking arts is a punch. It is used extensively in patterns/katas, for sparring and in the numerous boxing type drills common in most schools. So why are so many people scared/hesitant/reliant to practice punches by breaking boards, which, after all, is closer to a real self-defense situation, like hitting a jaw?

The answer is simple. Without proper conditioning, it hurts to punch boards. You can damage soft tissue, and it can take months to heal. You can even injure your wrist or break bones.

To be effective, the striker needs to ensure proper conditioning of the knuckles, the tendons, and ligaments of the hand, wrist, elbow, and shoulder, and proper technique. Wearing hand wraps and gloves can help in class and I recommend them if you are hitting a bag or pad for hundreds of repetitions. But you still need to condition the hand for when you are not all geared up.

In the old school way of training, the fist was to hit stuff, swell up, bleed, maybe break a bone or two then after it healed up... do it again until it no longer hurt. You can identify these guys by the way their hands look --- tough, callused, and scarred with enlarged knuckles. This doesn't appeal to most people.

Here is a process to toughen your knuckles and wrists so you can punch with confidence, without protection. This is how Master Andre Blake, a close disciple of General Choi, taught me 15 years ago, and it is how I teach my students today.

First, look closely at your knuckles. As you slowly make a fist, you will see that in front of each knuckle are tendons that will hit the board first. When you crush a tendon between your knuckle bones and the board, you injure it and it swells. To avoid the swelling, you need to build calluses so the tendon shifts out of the contact point when a fist is made.

Start your process with a palm-sized piece of carpet. Holding it in the palm of one hand (fuzzy side out), lightly punch it with the other. Rotate on impact, tightening/locking your wrist. Do this until your knuckles start to get red and STOP; do not tear the skin or cause blisters. Rest for a day and

repeat until you are able to punch and twist fairly hard for about 3 minutes or 100-200 repetitions without damage (it depends on the force of rotation). Minimum 1 month. Then.... Flip the carpet over and use the rough side. Your repetitions and time will drop dramatically. Start the conditioning again until you can do about 1 minute or 30-60 repetitions. Minimum 1 month.

If at any point during the conditioning you break the skin, wait until it heals. Then continue as before. The same rule applies throughout the training process, especially if bruising joint soreness occurs.

At this point you will need a dallyon/makiwara board. You can buy one or make your own. Personally I prefer the ones made out of wood with a cushioned leather pad over spring coils in the rear. To make your own, simply wrap jute around a stable object. (Hitting a bare tree or other objects without enough shock absorption is not recommended.)

Start the conditioning cycle over again. Your technique must be good; the fist is more or less horizontal with the shoulder and center line of the body, no flaring out of the elbows. Lean in slightly on impact pushing from the rear foot through the lower back (like pushing a car). Do NOT bounce off the target. Hit only hard enough so that you can control the impact. (Hit, Stick and Grind).

## LEVEL 1

3 sets of 10 punches 30% power and increase over 5 weeks or more to 5 sets 20 repetitions

## LEVEL 2

3 sets of 5 punches at 60% power and increase over 5 weeks or more to 5 sets of 10 repetitions

## LEVEL 3

2 sets of 3 punches at 80% power and increase over 5 weeks or more to 5 sets 5 repetitions.

Check your tendons and their positioning again by making a fist and checking the position of the tendons when you do so. If they move out of the way you are ready to go to start breaking boards without a pad to protect your knuckles.

Slow and steady is how to win this battle. **TKD**

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**Makiwara:** Above, store bought (photo courtesy of Masterline) and below, home made.

