



Blocks and Punches



Blocks and punches is a great drill for training reaction time, focus, timing, conditioning, distancing, structure, and so much more!

The Basic Blocks

Lower block	Outer block	Soft lower block	Soft Outer block
Middle block	Knifehand block	Soft middle block	Soft Knifehand
Rising block	Elbow block	Soft rising block	Soft Elbow block

The Progression

Level I. One Green Stripe

Basic blocking with consecutive counterattacks
Lower block, middle block, and rising block

Level II. Two Green Stripes

Simultaneous counterattacks
Add outer block and knifehand block

Level III. Green Belt

Double blocking
Add elbow block

Level IV. One Brown Stripe

Soft style blocking
Soft lower, soft middle, and soft rising block

Level V. Two Brown Stripes

Double blocking with counterattacks (hard style blocks)
Soft style blocking
Add soft outer, soft knifehand, and soft elbow block

Level I: One Green Stripe

To begin, assume a natural stance approximately one arm's length from your partner. One person attacks with alternating horizontal punches to the appropriate target level. The defender executes the designated blocks in the following pattern: left, right, right, left, for each technique, intercepting the attack at the centerline. Against alternating punches this results in one block to the inside and one block to the outside with each arm.

Many blocks can be used as attacks by striking your opponent's attacking limb with enough force to cause injury and discourage further attack. The hard-style blocks should be performed with enough force to toughen the blocking surface as well as the attacking arm, but not so hard as to inflict great pain on you or your partner. Turn your shoulders 45° to the half-front facing position as you block, causing missed attacks to merely glance off their targets, preventing a solid, square hit.

When performed from a rectangular stance, your lower body and legs are strengthened. Eventually, you should be able to perform the sequences moving forward and backward in stance.

A variation of this drill can be performed with both partners executing simultaneous, identical blocks, intercepting each other on the centerline.

As you become more familiar and proficient with the blocks and punches drill, you should add a speedy and effective counterattack after each block. There is a standard counterattack matched with each blocking technique.

Attack	Defense	Counterattack
Low punch	Lower block	High punch (opposite hand)
Middle punch	Middle block	Middle punch (opposite hand)
High punch	Rising block	Low punch (opposite hand)

Level II: Two Green Stripes

At each level of training you will get to add new blocks to your set of blocks and punches. The blocks required for your promotion to the rank two green stripes are the outer block and knifehand block. Your task is to practice, explore, and become proficient at applying these blocks against your partner's powerful and focused attacks. Remember that both partners should take care to use control and avoid inflicting injury.

Take care not to let the drill become so that you are anticipating your opponent's attack. Instead, learn to distinguish and cue off of the subtle body movements that precede and telegraph your opponent's intentions. Feel free to use body mobility as part of your defense, but try not to make significant stance changes during the drill. As your skill with each block increases, add movement, advancing or retreating with each technique.

The next level of counterattacking is the simultaneous counter. The biggest change is the chamber position. Only the blocking hand goes to the blocking hand chamber position, while the reaction hand chambers at the ribs for a punch or strike. Execute both techniques at the same time.

Attack	Defense	Simultaneous Counterattack
Low punch	Lower block	High punch (opposite hand)
Middle punch	Middle block	Middle punch (opposite hand)
High punch	Rising block	Low punch (opposite hand)
Middle punch	Outer block	Backfist strike (same hand)
Middle punch	Knifehand block	Spearhand strike (same hand)

Note that the outer block counterattack (backfist strike) cannot be performed simultaneously because it is done with the same hand that you block with.

Level III: Green Belt

The Double Blocking Principle

Different than a double block, the double blocking principle is a method of applying the basic blocks that dramatically increases the efficiency of your technique by incorporating your reaction arm actively into the technique.

Your reaction hand will serve as the primary blocking limb, executing an outward block to deflect the attack. Although quick, this type of block leaves you vulnerable to being trapped. Therefore, the inner version of the same level technique is executed to clear the attack, leaving you with a free hand with which to counter (i.e.: a middle level outer block would be immediately followed by an inner middle block). A block executed with double blocking principle intercepts an incoming attack in far less time than it would take with a “regular” technique.

Level IV: One Brown Stripe

Soft Style Blocking

The concept behind soft style blocking is to intercept and redirect an incoming attack with minimal force. In fact, when done correctly with proper timing and cohesion, a soft style block will actually *add* to an opponent’s incoming force.

Reach out with your blocking hand to find and intercept the opponent’s attack early enough that you can sense and control its incoming path. Use that hand to guide the attack past its intended target as you smoothly move your body out of the way.

While hard style blocking is commonly practiced in a rectangular stance, soft style blocking is usually performed from an inward stance. Shift your weight to one foot by pivoting on the balls of your feet and sliding your heels sideways. It is important to move your center off the line of attack while still maintaining good structure.

As usual, perform your sets of blocks and punches with zeal and intensity. Blocking, even soft style blocking, is an active rather than passive activity, and requires you to have good timing and precise, focused technique to be effective. Avoid anticipating your partner’s next move. Instead, cue off of his body movements. This dramatically increases the effectiveness and value of the blocks and punches drill for sparring and self-defense.

Level V: Two Brown Stripes

Advanced Blocking Principles

The highest level of application in the blocks and punches drill utilizes combinations of double blocking and counterattacking. Advanced hard style is performed differently than soft style, and there is even a variation that is a mix of the two.

Hard Style

As you become a proficient blocker, you can turn many blocks into attacks. Advanced hard style blocking is done on a two count: 1) intercept and parry, 2) check and counterattack.

Start by double blocking the incoming attack, parrying it with your reaction hand. Pick up and check the attacking limb with the elbow of your blocking arm as you use your hand to simultaneously strike your opponent's body or head.

Soft Style

Advanced soft style blocking can be thought of as three separate moves for training: 1) intercept and parry, 2) catch and pull, 3) counterattack. In practice, however, moves 2 and 3 are performed almost simultaneously.

Start by double blocking the incoming attack with your reaction hand. Intercept the technique and guide it into your blocking hand. Then, as the blocking hand completes the technique, the hand that initially made contact springs back at the opponent. Attempt to strike him just as your blocking hand reaches maximum efficiency in the pullback.

Mixed

Combine the hard style advanced blocking method described above with the soft style and you can hit twice as many times with the same motion.

Execute a double block into a strike, then, use the finished position of the hard style block to begin a corresponding soft style block, grabbing the attacking limb and pulling the opponent into your second counter attack.

It should be noted that this only works with inward techniques such as the lower, middle, rising, and knifehand blocks. It does not translate as well to outside blocking motions like the outer block or elbow block.