



BOXING



The fundamental punches of western boxing are taught for their practical self-defense value and usefulness in sparring. Students learn early on how the jab-cross of western boxing relates to the lunge and reverse punch we learn in our karate training. From there students learn the hook, uppercut, and basic defensive maneuvers, including ducking and parrying. By the time students have finished the boxing progression, they will have a good boxing foundation in place and feel comfortable using boxing techniques in sparring and self-defense.

Level I: Jab/Cross

One Green Stripe

1. Stance
2. Footwork
3. Combinations

Level II: Hook/Uppercut/Roundhouse

Two Green Stripes

1. Footwork
2. Combinations

Level III: Basic Defense

Green Belt

1. Defense against the four basic punches
2. The clinch

Level IV: Evasion

Brown Belt

1. Ducking and fading
2. Bobbing and weaving
3. Slipping

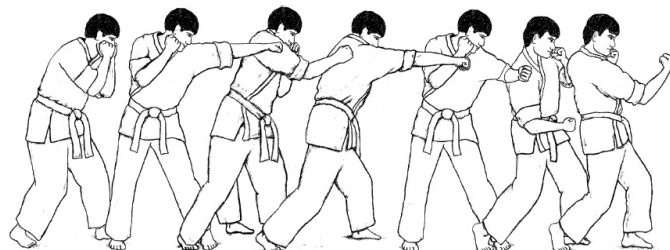
Level V: Strategy and Tactics

Black Belt

1. Inside/outside game
2. Three types of timing
3. Drawing/baiting
4. Feinting/programming

Level VI: Sparring

Black Belt and up



A Brief History

Barefist boxing was a popular spectator activity in Europe throughout the Dark Ages, and it was not uncommon for matches to include all manner of grappling and striking. It was the British who first presented boxing as a ruled sport. The first of the “Prize Ring” champions was James Figg (or Fig), who at the age of 24 opened a training studio, Figg’s Amphitheater, in London in 1719, where he staged bouts and taught the combative arts. Figg was an expert at quarter-staff (bo), cudgel, and short sword fighting, but it was as a bare-fist boxer that Figg made his name. Figg took on all challenges and remained undefeated until 1733 (he died in 1734), and it is from his skill and enthusiasm that the sport of Western Boxing was born. Jack Broughton succeeded Figg as the second great founding father of the ring. Broughton also fought prize bouts, and taught “the theory and practice of that truly British Art” in his London Academy. After witnessing his mentor, Figg, being choked by his opponent for over half a minute before escaping, Broughton began refining a new code of rules to eliminate such brutality. These included no hitting below the belt or striking a fallen opponent.



James Figg



Jack Broughton

Recommended Reading:

Championship Boxing: Explosive Punching and Aggressive Defense
by Jack Dempsey, 1950

See the Satori Dojo library for a physical copy, or our e-library for a PDF download.

Level I: Jab/Cross

The Stance

The most important consideration when it comes to a boxing stance is balance and flexibility. You must be able to move quickly and smoothly, and be able to shift your weight easily from one leg to the other to punch effectively. The standard boxing stance is flexible and allows you to both attack or defend, move in or out, or side to side with ease. To ensure good balance, keep your feet about one shoulder width wide and one shoulder width long. Your weight should be evenly distributed between both feet, with your front foot turned inward slightly. Keep your knees bent and weight on the balls of your feet to stay “light on your toes.” Keep your hands up and elbows in to protect your body. Your hands should be held at about shoulder height, your loosely clenched fists turned palm inward with the knuckles resting softly on your cheeks to protect your face. Finally, tuck your chin comfortably into your lead shoulder and “fight through your eyebrows” to prevent your opponent from landing a square blow to your face or chin, one of the most vulnerable spots for a knockout hit. The left lead is favored by right-handed boxers and is called the orthodox stance. Southpaws, or left-handed boxers, prefer to lead with their right hand.

Footwork

The ultimate aim of boxing is to hit your opponent without being hit in return. A common saying in boxing is “Footwork wins fights.” Good footwork depends on short movements such as the step-drag method in order to maintain a firm base. When moving to the left, move your left foot first followed by your right. When moving to the right, move your right foot first followed by your left. To retreat, move your rear foot first followed by your front. When advancing, move your front foot first followed by your rear. Maintain an on-guard position and protect yourself at all times.

Use your footwork to control the distance between you and your opponent by moving in, out, or side-to-side. When a right-handed fighter faces another orthodox boxer, circling to your right can move you away from your opponent’s dominant hand while allowing you to still target the opponent with both of your hands.

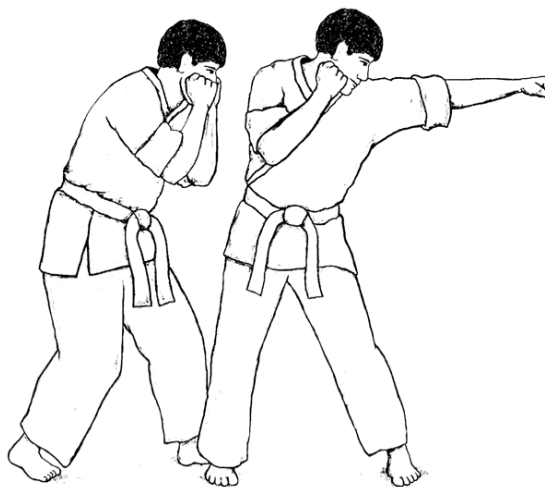
The Mechanics of Punching

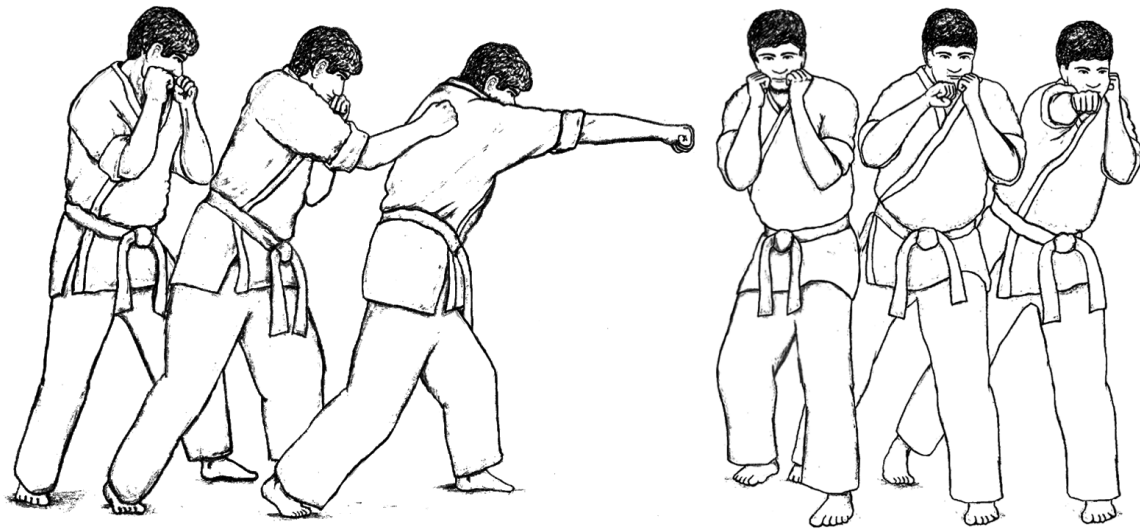
There are three important factors when considering the mechanics of punching: speed, accuracy, and power. For speed your punches must travel the shortest path to and from the target, and you must remain relaxed until the moment of impact. Accuracy depends on practice and smooth, fluid movement. For power it is essential that you get your weight behind your techniques. All this can be obtained by rotating on an imaginary central axis in such a manner that your hip and shoulder precede your arm motion as you shift your body weight from one foot to the other. Your arms are only the vehicles through which you transfer the full force of your entire body. Punch through your target, and return your hands immediately to a guarded position along the same plane that the punch was delivered.

Jab

The jab, or straight lead, is a quick punch thrown with your lead hand. It is the most commonly used punch in boxing. Known for its speed, not its power, a boxer uses his jab to keep his opponent off balance while attempting to expose him to a series of follow-up techniques. To be effective, you must throw your jab quickly and use timing and deception. From a boxing guard (both hands up, elbows in, chin tucked, knees bent), pivot your body on its central axis, rotating your lead shoulder forward, and snap your relaxed arm in a straight line to the target. Rotate your forearm inward as you punch, assuming a horizontal fist position at the moment of impact. Without dropping your hand, quickly withdraw your punching arm back to its guarded position.

Use your jab offensively by moving forward as you punch, or defensively as you retreat. Effective combinations can be built with the jab, starting with the double jab. Strike twice, using the first strike to set up your second. You can also change levels, striking high-low or low-high. The next logical step would be to triple up the jab. You can aim all three punches at the opponent's head, or mix it up such as high-low-high, low-low-high, high-high-low, etc.





Cross

The cross is a power punch thrown with your rear hand. It is usually thrown after creating an opening with your jab, but must be used sparingly as a miss wastes energy and can leave you open to counter punches. From a boxing stance, keep the lead side of your body fixed and pivot on it like a hinge. Turn your hips forcefully and thrust your rear arm out into a palm down horizontal punch position. Your weight should shift over your lead foot at the moment of impact, transferring your body weight into the punch. Without dropping your arm, quickly withdraw your punching hand back to its guarding position and return to a stable and balanced stance.

Combinations

Effective combinations of the jab and cross include the jab-cross (1-2), the jab-cross-jab (1-2-1) and the jab-jab-cross (1-1-2). Develop your own combinations of two to four punches, or more. Just keep in mind that the more punches a combination has, the less chance that it can be thrown unimpeded. You can also change the rhythm of your combos, striking fast-fast-fast, slow-fast-fast, slow-slow-fast, etc. Vary the levels of your attacks, striking high-low-high, low-low-high, high-high-low, etc. Finally, think about the angles of your attacks. Confound your opponent's defense by stepping slightly offline an instant before launching your attack. Experiment on the heavy bag, starting with three one-minute rounds.

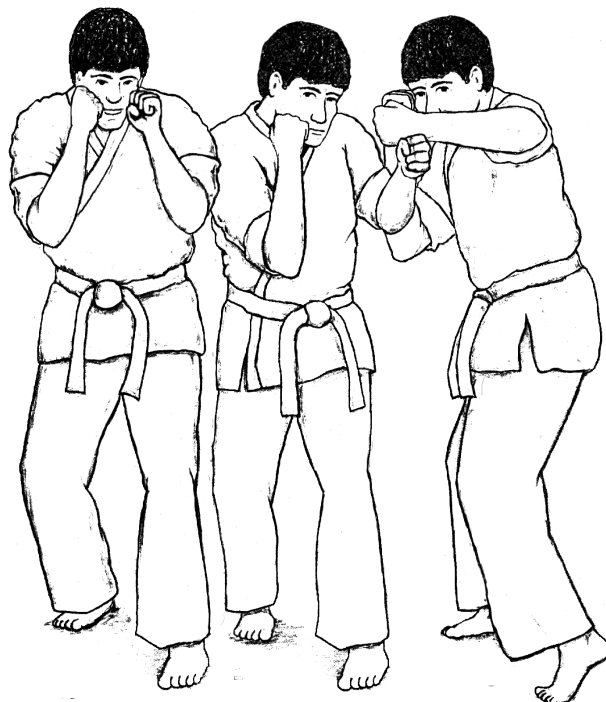
Level II: Hook/Uppercut

Hook

The hook is a bent arm punch that strikes its target from the side. Although the hook can be executed with either hand (the lead hook is a number 3 punch, while the rear hook is a number 4), the lead hook is the most commonly used and the technique that will be described here. Begin in a boxing stance and raise the elbow of your lead arm to the side, leveling your fist with the target as you forcefully pivot your hips into the technique. Turn your lead hip and shoulder through your centerline as you whip your relaxed lead arm in an arc through the target. Try to maintain a 90-degree angle at the elbow joint. Power in the hook comes from transferring your body weight at the moment of impact. The striking surface is the first two knuckles of your fist, which should be vertical at the moment of impact, thumb up and palm facing in. Quickly retract your punching arm to a guarded position or you risk leaving yourself exposed to a counter attack.

It is important not to telegraph your hook punch by opening your stance too much or too early. Remember that the hook punch is a close-to-medium range technique and does not travel far to its target (rarely more than 18 inches). When thrown properly, your hook punch will often take your opponent by surprise because it travels outside his line of vision. Although weak when thrown as an arm punch, when thrown with the force of your body behind it, the hook punch can be a devastating finishing technique.

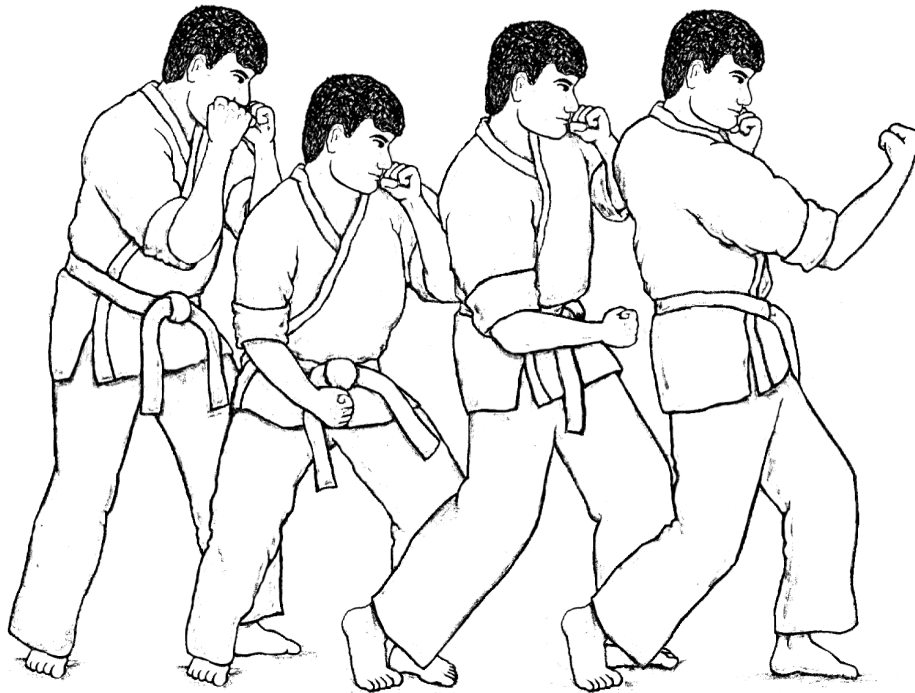
Combinations with the hook include the jab-hook (1-3), the jab-cross-hook (1-2-3), and the lead hook to the body followed by a lead hook to the head (3-3).



Uppercut

The lead hand uppercut is a number 5 punch, and the rear uppercut is a 6. The rear hand uppercut is a power punch to the chin or body. It is very useful as a counter punch, and an effective in-fighting technique. From a boxing stance, dip slightly at the knees and drop your body to the rear as you brace the elbow of your punching arm on your rear hip. Keeping your arm bent at about a 90-degree angle, pivot your hips and rear shoulder to the centerline of your body and forcefully straighten your body as you drive your fist upward and into the target using the power of your legs. Quickly withdraw the punching arm to a guarded position.

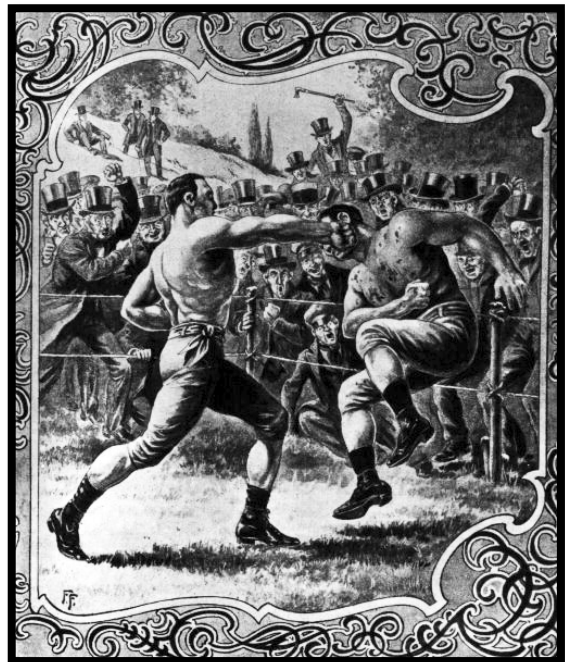
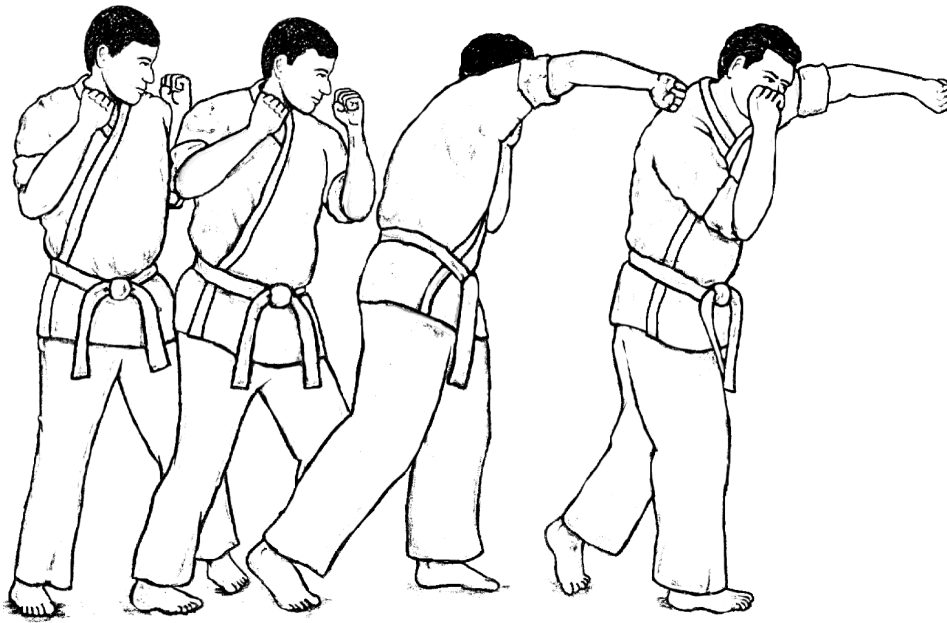
Add the uppercut punch into your combinations such as jab-cross-hook-uppercute (1-2-3-6), or jab-jab-uppercute (1-1-6).



Roundhouse Punch

(not required until 1 black stripe)

The roundhouse punch is included here because, like the uppercut, it belongs to the hook family of punches, only the roundhouse has a much longer range. Also referred to as an overhand right or looping punch. From a boxing stance, corkscrew your punching arm forward, arcing around or over your opponent's guard. Twist your wrist and forearm to strike the target with the first two knuckles of your fist. Quickly withdraw your punching arm to a guarded position to prevent exposing yourself to counterattack. The roundhouse punch can be a deceptive technique used to get around your opponent's guard.



Right: A nineteenth century illustration of a bare-knuckle boxer landing a well-placed roundhouse punch.

Level III: Basic Defense

Blocking and Parrying

In the sport of boxing, getting hit with a punch is all but guaranteed. Therefore, it is vitally important for you to learn how to properly defend yourself. That way, when you do get hit, your defense will minimize the damage.

You should always try to maintain the initiative and keep moving in any boxing bout. When you have the initiative, it is you who is in control and dictating how the fight is going. Lose the initiative, and it's your opponent who starts controlling the fight. When you lose the initiative, go into a defensive mode. Defensive postures should just be a temporary state for as short a time as possible. The longer you stay in a defensive mode, the greater the chance you have of losing the fight. Try to anticipate your opponent's next move, find an opening to launch a counter attack, and try to regain that initiative again as quickly as possible.

Defending Against the Jab

Two main defenses against the jab are catching and parrying.

Catch

With your hand in the basic defensive position, your palms should be facing you. As you see the punch coming in, twist your wrist so that your palm faces away from you. Push your hand forward three to five inches to meet the punch, but don't reach too far or you leave your head unguarded. Immediately bring your hand back into your defensive position. You can also use the hand you didn't block with to throw a counter punch. This is called catch and return.

Parry

An effective parry is a tremendous weapon to have in your defensive arsenal and is often used to set up devastating counter shots. A parry is a slap used to redirect the motion and trajectory of a punch, causing it to miss you. Lean your torso back slightly as you parry, letting your opponent's momentum carry his punch past you. If your opponent throws a left-handed punch, slap it away with your right hand. Likewise, if he throws a right-handed punch, slap it away with your left hand. After a successful parry, immediately throw a punch of your own while your opponent is off balance and vulnerable.

Defending Against the Cross

Common defenses against the cross are the shoulder roll and the stop jab (jamming). Use the stop jab if you can see the cross coming early, and the shoulder roll to cover up if you see the cross coming late.

Shoulder Roll

The left shoulder roll is an effective way to block a right cross aimed at your head. Lean your torso back slightly as you shrug your shoulder to your ear, keeping your opponent in sight by peeking around your shoulder.

Stop Jab

The stop jab is best used against an opponent who telegraphs his cross. As the opponent opens his shoulder to load the punch, counter punch with a jab to the opponent's shoulder or bicep, jamming his technique. This technique can be used with an open hand to smother the right cross as you counterpunch or move into the clinch.

Defending Against the Hook

Two good defenses against the hook are the duck and the wall.

Wall

To block a hook, use your folded arm to form a wall that you can momentarily hide behind. To block high, put the palm of your hand against the side of your head just behind your ear and duck your head into the block.

Duck

Ducking is a good defense against a high hook punch. From your basic stance, bend both your legs at the knees, ensuring that you keep your back straight. Ducking needs to be performed as quickly as your opponent throws his punch, so, for maximum speed, relax your knees and let gravity pull your body straight down. Drop only enough for the incoming punch to graze the top of your head, returning to your starting position as quickly as you dropped.

Defending Against the Uppercut

There are two main ways of defending against the uppercut. The first is to cover and roll with the punch. The second, the inside parry, is a hard style lower block that neutralizes your opponent's uppercut.

Roll

Rolling with the punches is the act of twisting your body away from the momentum of your opponent's punch. This minimizes the damage by reducing the amount of impact you have to absorb. Be careful not to break your line of sight with your opponent as this can leave you vulnerable to attacks from your blindside.

Inside parry

The inside parry, also referred to as "brushing away", is a same side lower block. The power of this defense lies in the fact that you are driving the bony ridge on the outer edge of your forearm against the far more vulnerable underside of the opponent's forearm.

The Clinch

Clinching is an effective defensive tactic that can frustrate your opponent by rendering his offense null and void. Clinching is the act of tying an opponent up at close quarters, hugging him to smother his punches. Press the side of your head close against your opponent's. You can hook one hand behind his head, and the other in the crook of his lead arm, like a basic judo grip. The clinch gives you good opportunities to control the direction of the fight. Practice clinching whenever your sparring partner comes in too close, tying up his arms and not letting go. From here you could counter punch then return to the clinch, and/or apply an unexpected judo throw, taking your opponent to the ground. This is a good way to nullify a boxer's strengths.

Level IV - Evasion

Getting hit takes a toll on you, even when you block. Evasion, the art of avoiding punches completely, is essential to a good defense. Constantly shifting your head position makes you a moving target, erratic and much harder to hit. This can make your opponent hesitant to commit to his punches. When executed correctly, evasion can disrupt an opponent's rhythm enough to throw him completely off his game.

Techniques of evasion include ducking, fading, bobbing, weaving, and slipping. While these skills are very useful when your opponent is attacking you, they are equally important to apply when you are on the offensive, both as you are launching your attack as well as after, retreating quickly out of range to avoid a possible counter.

Ducking

We discussed ducking as a good defense against a high hook punch, but you can duck just about any punch aimed at your head. From your basic stance, bend both your legs at the knees, ensuring that you keep your back straight. Ducking needs to be performed as quickly as your opponent throws his punch, so, for maximum speed, relax your knees and let gravity pull your body straight down. Drop only enough for the incoming punch to graze the top of your head, returning to your starting position as quickly as you dropped.

A good way to practice ducking is to drill with a partner armed with a pool noodle. When your partner swings at you, duck. Add counter attacks, punching to the body as you are ducking, or immediately after rising. Work up to practicing by having an opponent throw hooks at your head. You can then add the duck into your heavy bag or focus mitts work. Make it a point to actively move your head during shadow boxing. It will soon become second nature to you, and you'll be much more difficult to hit clean.



Fading

Also known as swaying, the fade happens when a boxer anticipates a punch and moves his head backwards in order to avoid it. Even if the punch is impossible to avoid, the sway is a good way of lessening the impact of the blow. A proper fade back not only allows you to dodge your opponent's punches but also gives you the leverage to seamlessly translate into your own windup. By bending your knee to fade backwards, you can reduce the stress on your back, and achieve better results than if you were to 'limbo' out of the way.

Like the duck, train your fade with the pool noodle drill described above. Work up to practicing by having an opponent throw hooks at your head. You can then add the fade into your boxing combinations when shadowboxing, hitting the heavy bag, or working the focus mitts.

Bobbing and weaving

Bobbing and weaving is similar to ducking, but with added head movement. Like the duck, bobbing and weaving does not require that you move your feet. Start the bob by bending your knees and lowering your entire body, keeping your head and chest up. Then weave, moving your head laterally so that when you straighten your legs, your head is outside of the punch. Like ducking, you need to move quickly during a bob and weave.

Makes bobbing and weaving a key element of your defensive strategy. Practice performing various bobbing and weaving drills using a belt, heavy bag, a partner with a pool noodle or focus mitts, and when shadowboxing.

Slipping

Different from bobbing and weaving, slipping punches is a reactionary defensive tactic and requires great reflexes. First, you must anticipate the opponent's attack, then move to the left or right ever so slightly, causing the punch to miss. Slipping involves performing two actions simultaneously, bending at your waist to lower your upper body and twisting your torso. Doing abdominal exercises will help build your strength to perform a slip seamlessly.

Practice slipping punches both on the focus mitts and in sparring. During shadow boxing, envision an imaginary opponent and perform your slip movements in front of a mirror. After you have mastered slipping punches, as well as bobbing and weaving, you will become extremely difficult to hit and opponents will get frustrated because they are unable to land anything of significance.

Level V: Strategy and Tactics

Your strategy is your overall plan, while your tactics are the techniques you use to implement that plan. A good fight strategy plays to your strengths, while masking your weaknesses. The most basic strategies are built around physical characteristics such as size, or speed.

Distancing

One of the simplest strategies to control the fight is to control the distance between you and your opponent. The two variants on this strategy are commonly referred to as the inside game and the outside game. When facing a taller opponent, you will need to get past his longer reach in order to land your punches. Therefore, you should probably choose to fight an inside game. This will entail staying out of range until you see an opportunity to safely cross the gap between you. Once inside, use a combination of close range techniques such as hooks and uppercuts. On the contrary, a taller boxer should use his longer reach to his advantage, keeping his smaller opponent at bay by adopting an outside strategy.

Timing

Timing as another way that you could control a fight. There are three types of timing: anticipating and hitting early, before the opponent can launch his attack (in karate this is known as *sen sen no sen*), blocking and simultaneously countering (*sen no sen*), and striking after the opponent's attack has ended (*go no sen*). Quick fighters should try to get their techniques off early, using their greater speed and timing to out punch their slower opponent. Standing toe-to-toe with your opponent and attempting to outbox him also requires a good eye and fast reflexes. Slower opponents might be more comfortable weathering an opponent's barrage of attacks before exploding out with a counter combination.

Drawing and Baiting

Drawing is strategy in which you purposely leave an opening in an attempt to get your opponent to attack you. While this may seem counter-intuitive, it can be useful to create an opening for you to counterattack, and, since you are expecting the attack, you will be better prepared to evade or defend. By provoking a particular attack, you can also control the fight by controlling your opponent's choices. This increases your ability to anticipate correctly while decreasing your choice reaction time, because fewer choices allow you to react faster. Baiting and countering is the easiest way to beat an aggressive fighter. Rather than trying to out-punch him, be clever and get him to throw the punches you want.

The proper way to bait is to make yourself LOOK like you're open, but you're not supposed to actually leave yourself vulnerable. You want to make your opponent THINK that you're open. Lowering your hands a few inches while leaning your head in slightly is baiting. Dropping your hands to your waist and sticking your chin straight out isn't baiting, its just stupid.

To draw a jab, stand at long distance, making sure you're far enough away that only his jab can reach you. Then, lower your hands a little. Be prepared to quickly close the distance and counter. Move your head and throw a counter jab, a big right cross or a lunging left hook.

The Three-Step Rule can help you create effective drawing skills by developing a variety of effective tactics based on sound strategy.

- 1) Leave an opening your opponent cannot resist.
- 2) Wait until he is committed to the attack, then
- 3) Counter where you know he will be open.

Feinting

Boxing feints are maneuvers that are designed to distract or mislead your opponent by making them think that a certain action will take place when in fact, another action or no action actually occurs. Implementing feints into your skillset will improve you as a fighter. Examples of feints include pretending to punch but then not doing it, or pretending to hit the body but then going for the head instead.

The most common feint is the half-punch. The name is pretty self-explanatory, but the right set-up and technique is essential to not give your game away. Basically, your aim is to throw a punch half way (or slightly less) to make your opponent react in a certain way, opening him up for a real punch. It's important that you don't over commit to your feints or over use them, because a smart fighter will eventually catch on to your trick and try to capitalize on it.

Programming

The human mind can be very predictable. We know that our brains have a natural tendency to look for patterns, and we can use this knowledge to trick our opponents into doing what we want them to do. This is called programming. Programming is an exceptional method of setting up your techniques so as to maximize your probability of eluding your opponent's defenses in order to land a decisive, disabling strike.

To begin, deliver a punch to any open target. If it is blocked, retreat to your ready position, only to attack the same target again, in the same manner, a moment later. Each time, observe how your opponent counters your technique and quickly determine where he is open in that instant. The third time you attack, your opponent will subconsciously expect the same attack you have thrown previously. Use that expectation to your advantage by feinting with the initial technique before striking where your opponent has left himself open. Again, timing is important. Do not strike on a 1-2 practice count as it allows the opponent an opportunity to adjust and counter your technique. Instead, strike on the half-beat...not 1-2, but 1-1.2!

Level VI - Sparring

Sparring is a time for you and your opponent to help develop each other's skills by practicing real boxing moves in a real boxing environment. It is not the time for both fighters to try and beat each other up. It's also important to spar with as many different people as you can to get used to defending against various fighting styles.

Push yourself physically during sparring, but not the point to where you can't learn anything. Develop your skills, correct your weaknesses, and get use to "fighting". But don't spar with the attitude of trying to "win". When you're a beginner without developed boxing skills, it's too tempting to want to use anything other than skills to win. You might decide to rely on your superior endurance, or size, or that hard right hand shot. If you win this way, you'll learn nothing. You won't be any better after the sparring than you were before you got in there. Instead, try experimenting with different combinations of punching and movement.

You also shouldn't be trying to knockout your opponent. When sparring with a less-skilled opponent, don't try to beat him, but focus on defense rather than attack. Sparring is critical to learning to implement all of the defensive techniques you've learned. You want a partner who will get better so he can test you more. Therefore, give you opponent a chance to move with you and you benefit from a greater workout. Let that sparring become a dance, with both of you getting more and more comfortable with each other.

What do you do if you're on the losing end of a sparring match? Try not to get frustrated or feel defeated. Instead, adapt your strategy and try again. If you feel like your opponent is going too hard, stand up for yourself and tell him that he's not giving you a chance to work. If you feel uncomfortable, stop the match. You do not have to prove anything to anybody. Respect your limits and recognize that your health and growth in the sport are of paramount importance.

If you don't have anyone to practice with, try shadowboxing. Use a mirror to check your form. Use a double-ended slip ball to help you practice your defense. This is a lightweight ball that hangs from the ceiling, but also has a bungee cord that secures it to the floor. You can use the double-ended slip ball to work on your reactions and head movement without getting hit hard.

Boxing into Judo

Trying to out strike someone with superior stand-up skills is a losing strategy. If you feel that you are being out-classed at boxing, switch your strategy to something that may give you an advantage, such as transitioning into grappling and taking your opponent to the ground. Boxing already utilizes an upright posture similar to judo, especially in regards to clinch work where under hooks and over hooks are common ways of tying up an opponent. This also gives you the positioning you need to execute most judo throws.

One simple entry is to keep your hands up and advance quickly, jabbing your way into the clinch. Once inside, grasp the opponent and use footsweeps or throws to dump him to the ground.

You can also use the Philly shell, a variation on the modern guard, to enter sideways while jabbing into the clinch. This allows you to close with your legs behind the opponent and your arm in front for an over-the-neck takedown, or, conversely, with your legs in front and your lead arm behind, setting you up for a hip throw such as o-goshi.

The strength of being an eclectic martial artist lies in our versatility. We may not be able to out-box someone, but can he grapple? Once a boxer is on his back, he can no longer shift his weight and so should have a difficult time punching you with great force. A basic knowledge of grappling should allow you to control and submit your opponent.