

# How to.... Defend

How to Block, Move, Jam, Slip, Bob, Duck and Weave.

## In general

In Northern Freestyle blocks are used to stop and deflect incoming attacks. They engage various parts of the arm with the hand and are held in different positions such as knife-hand, closed fist etc. Each block is suitable for a particular kind of attack and may be combined with another punch or kick to make a counter-attack. Movement is also important as making an opponent's kick miss is in many ways better than blocking it. When they miss thinking the kick was going to connect this will throw them off balance, which can yield opportunities for counterattack. Also within the style are boxing defensive techniques which we will look at first.

**Slip** – Slipping rotates the body slightly so that an incoming punch passes harmlessly next to the head. As the opponent's punch arrives, the fighter sharply rotates the hips and shoulders. This turns the chin sideways and allows the punch to "slip" past. Muhammad Ali was famous for extremely fast and close slips, as was an early Mike Tyson.

**Sway or Fade** – To anticipate a punch and move the upper body or head back so that it misses or has its force appreciably lessened. Also called "rolling with the punch" or "Riding the Punch".

**Duck or Break** – To drop down with the back straight so that a punch aimed at the head glances or misses entirely.

**Bob and Weave** – Bobbing moves the head laterally and beneath an incoming punch. As the opponent's punch arrives, the fighter bends the legs quickly and simultaneously shifts the body either slightly right or left. Once the punch has been evaded, the fighter "weaves" back to an upright position, emerging on either the outside or inside of the opponent's still-extended arm. To move outside the opponent's extended arm is called "bobbing to the outside". To move inside the opponent's extended arm is called "bobbing to the inside". Joe Frazier, Jack Dempsey, Mike Tyson and Rocky Marciano were masters of bobbing and weaving.

**Parry/Block** – Parrying or blocking uses the fighter's shoulder, hands or arms as defensive tools to protect against incoming attacks. A block generally receives a punch while a parry tends to deflect it. A "palm" or "cuff" is a block which intentionally takes the incoming punch on that portion of the defender's glove.

**The Cover-Up** – Covering up is the last opportunity (other than rolling with a punch) to avoid an incoming strike to an unprotected face or body. Generally speaking, the hands are held high to protect the head and chin and the forearms are tucked against the torso to impede body shots. When protecting the body,

the fighter rotates the hips and lets incoming punches "roll" off the guard. To protect the head, the fighter presses both fists against the front of the face with the forearms parallel and facing outwards. This type of guard is weak against attacks from below.

**The Clinch** – Clinching is a rough form of grappling and occurs when the distance between both fighters has closed and straight punches cannot be employed. In this situation, the fighter attempts to hold or "tie up" the opponent's hands so he is unable to throw hooks or uppercuts. To perform a clinch, the fighter loops both hands around the outside of the opponent's shoulders, scooping back under the forearms to grasp the opponent's arms tightly against his own body. In this position, the opponent's arms are pinned and cannot be used to attack. Clinching is a temporary match state and is quickly stopped by the referee.

Then we have the more offensive blocks from Taekwondo and karate designed to harm the opponent's limbs.

### **Outward Palm Block**

Although usually executed with the front hand the outward palm block can be carried out using either hand. Start by moving the head out of the way of the assailant's blow, as you move the hand in an outward direction across the face. This block can be carried out either stationary or moving forward and backwards. Utilise from the forearm to the palm of the hand as the impact area, the hand should be tight with fingers straight and pulled back. The head and body should move in the opposite direction of the blocking arm; knees bent, hand tense. This block can be performed as an outward knifehand block to attempt to break the opponents arm during the block.

### **Downward Palm Block**

Although usually executed with the front hand the downward palm block can be carried out using either hand. Start by moving the arm in a downward and outward direction the hand should be tight with fingers straight and pulled back. The technique should be performed with a balance movement backwards when going back or to the sides or forward body motion when moving forward. This block can be carried out either stationary or moving forward and backwards. Utilise from the forearm to the palm of the hand as the impact area, with a follow through motion. The front hip should be rotated forward in case the block misses so that any kick would hit the quads rather than the groin.

## **Inward Palm Block**

Although usually executed with the front hand the inward palm block can be carried out using either hand, moving forward, backwards, sideways. Start by moving the arm across the face or body in an inward direction Utilise the elbow to the fingers as the impact area the hand should be tight with fingers straight and pulled back. Can be performed with a knifehand or a closed fist to attempt to break the arm of any opponent, also can performed from the head down at 45 degrees to stop a rising turning kick.

## **Double Forearm Block**

This is a more advanced block, designed to be used against a strong attack to the centre of the body. Standing sideways, the lead forearm blocks the attack with the fist closed. The second arm provides further support, linking into the crook of the arm so both forearms are at a 90 degree angle to the body.

## **Double Knife Hand Block**

With the hands held open in the knife hand position, a powerful kick aimed at the solar plexus can be successfully blocked. Both hands come across the body, intersecting at the forearms and providing a firm defence.

## **Chicken Wing Block**

This block is performed whilst turning into a turning kick attack; offer your forearm by raising your front elbow and dropping your hand to your hip (hence the chicken wing name as your arm looks the shape of a chicken wing). As the turning kick hits the forearm/elbow your spin continues 360 degrees and you strike with a back kick.

## **Jamming Kick's**

There is an important element of timing involved in jamming kicks. So, at one extreme you are out of the range of your opponents kicks and they miss, while at the other extreme your opponents kick never gets the chance to mature into something with much if any damage potential. Jamming is different to blocking; you are just taking away their range, and snuffing out any kick before it turns into fully fledged attack.

The time to jam a kick is during the chamber of your opponent's knee before they extend their kicks. Against a side kick or hook kick, go straight in at the chambered knee (fighting stance as always, elbows in, usually lead knee raised) or on an angle toward their back. Against a turning kick, you can move inside it with your lead knee up, plant and land that cross. Just remember when jamming a kick that you have to be able to correctly judge what they are doing, and then go in with confidence. Going in halfway and hesitating will cause you to be hit with whatever kick your opponent was chambering.