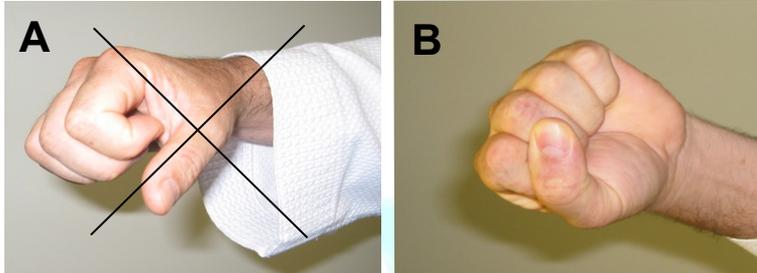


"If you want to grow high, you need to build a strong foundation". Bad technique habits will hold you back on your Taekwondo journey and can be very difficult to break once they become ingrained. Here are some of the little things that are important to bear in mind during class so that you are able to become a strong and competent black belt.

Holding the fist (*Jumok*)

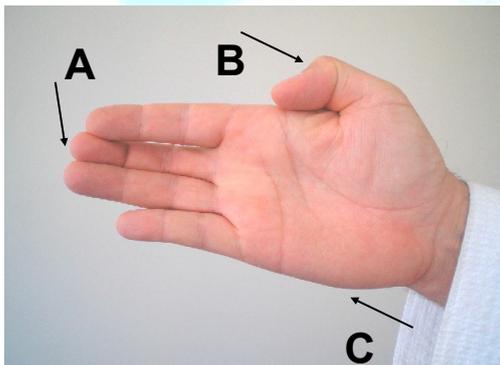


Correct

It is very common for white belts to forget about holding a tight fist (fig A). Obviously without one, punching and blocking techniques will be very ineffective and there will also be a distinct possibility of injuring the fingers, knuckles or wrist during practice. Usually, new students forget about locking the thumb over their clenched fingers (fig B).

Knife hand (*Sonnal*)

1) Slightly bend the middle and ring fingers so that they are exactly the same length as the index finger which is held rigidly (A). Bear in mind that this will take a fair bit of conditioning and practise to perfect.



2) Bend the thumb so that the fleshy part before the first joint is resting on top of the index finger (B).

3) When the hand is in this position tense the hand. Then the fleshy part of the hand between the little finger and the wrist (directly opposite the thumb) becomes tense (C). This is the area that makes contact during the knife hand strike or block.

Horse riding Stance (*Joo-chum Sohgi*)

The horse riding stance lowers your centre of gravity. This is why it is critical to ensure that you develop a strong and accurate horse riding stance as it makes you stable and more difficult to be knocked over.

One major problem beginners have with horse riding stance is that they have their feet either too close together or far too wide. Ideally, the feet should be one and a half to two shoulder widths apart.

Also, a lot of beginners experience difficulty because they feel the strain of bending their knees on the quad muscles so in order to gain relief they tend to straighten their legs.

Another critical aspect of the horse riding stance is to ensure that your **feet are parallel and directly below your knees**. If this is not achieved your bodyweight can put sideways pressure on your knees which can easily strain your knee joint - or worse.

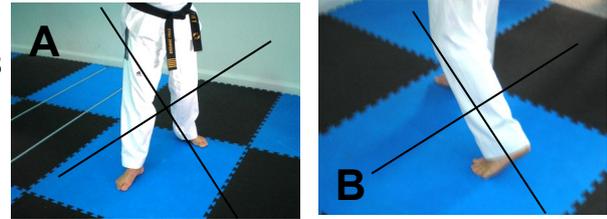


Forward Stance (*Ap Gubi*)

Forward stance is critical in the execution of form moves such as Poomsei, one step sparring, basic movements and self defence because it allows you to transfer your body weight forward which generates power into your hand strikes, blocks and punches.

To find an accurate right forward stance, stand with your feet one shoulder width apart with your feet parallel (Narrani Sohgi). From here, move the right foot one step forward then another. Then bend the right knee - this is vital as it helps protect the knee joint in the advent of it being kicked. The toes of the left foot move slightly to the left side.

The most common mistakes are: 1) To have the rear toes pointing to the side too much which has the effect of twisting your hips away from being aligned with the shoulders (fig A). 2) Not bending the front knee (fig A). 3) Not having the feet shoulder width apart (fig A). 4) Lifting the back heel off the ground (fig B). 5) Not keeping the back knee straight (fig B). A correct forward stance is when the feet are shoulder width apart in a way that is like standing on imaginary 'railway tracks'.



Correct Forward Stance

Walking stance (*Ap Sohgi*)

Walking stance or short stance as it is also commonly called is most used in Poomsei. It's literally just moving your foot forward in a natural way, like you do when you are walking. This stance is used to move quickly through sequences that involve kicking and to keep the body in a 'natural' position.

The most common mistakes when doing walking stance is 'thinking' too hard and keeping your feet too close together. Also, when concentration lapses it is common for the differences between forward stance and walking stance to become blurred so that they look the same. Ensure that this does not happen as it makes the Poomsei look sloppy.



Walking Stance

Back stance (*Dit Gubi*)

The back stance is one of those techniques that when done correctly captures the strength and power of Taekwondo as well as its aesthetics. Primarily it is used as a defensive and guarding stance however it can also be used as an attacking stance.

A good way to find a good strong left back stance is to firstly stand in an accurate horse riding stance (Joo-chum Sogi). Then, pivot the left foot so that instead of being parallel to the other foot the toes are facing out at 90°. The feet are kept in line except the left heel or more accurately the Achilles tendon (in left back stance) is facing the middle or the arch of the right foot.

If we use the 'tightrope or train track' analogy we would be standing on the 'tightrope' when in back stance. If we should slide our feet together they would form a 'T'. It is also important to remember that while standing in the back stance between 70-80% of your bodyweight should be on the back leg with 20-30% on the front.

Therefore, from this position it is possible to gauge your technical accuracy because if your weight is spread in this way you should then be able to lift your front foot up at anytime. Like the horse riding stance, it is *imperative* that you keep the knees bent.



Back Stance



Gihap (The Great Shout)

In Taekwondo, the *Gihap* or yell that is used in certain situations is a vital part of the art. A '*Gihap*' done at precisely the right moment is very important, because it is the means to harness and synchronise the energy of the body, mind and spirit.

New students tend to *Gihap* from the throat rather than from their lower abdomen area (*danchon*). A *Gihap* originating from the throat is ineffectual and can cause pain and even damage the voice box.

At first, you don't have to 'scream' your *Gihap*. Work on creating the correct sound first in conjunction with breathing 'in' through the nose.

When do we *Gihap*?

The *Gihap* is used during 'form' moves and drills in class, as well as when we free spar or break boards. We use a *Gihap* whenever we need to 'dig deep' within ourselves to become focused, energised and strong, particularly when we are under pressure.

Form moves

The short sharp *Gihap* sound of "**EHY**" is used every time we:

- Do horse riding stance punching.
- Use an attacking arm move or kick in a drill.
- Move from 'choombi' stance to 'open or closed' stance.
- When we change direction or sides in a drill.
- Do Poomsei at certain attacking moves in the routine, usually including the last move.
- Break boards or tiles. A *Gihap* should be done on the last exhalation breath before the break and the exhalation during the break.

Sparring

When we spar, there are a variety of different *Gihaps* that can be used in conjunction with certain attacks. The longer sounds are used during the 'wind up' moves and at the precise moment the kick or strike makes contact. The shorter sharper sounds should only be made at the point of contact.

Note: The sounds listed below are only an example and written in a phonetic way. It's okay to adapt each sound so that it suits you.

"PEY"

Use this sound when kicking high with a turning kick and round house kick or high punch.

"SHAH"

Use this sound for a sideways strike such as a hook kick or turning kick or body strike.

"PAR-SHAH"

This sound is used as above except in very rapid double or triple kick combinations such as in competition.

"AH-HAHRP"

This sound is used for downward attacks such as axe kicks, some spinning kicks and downward hand strikes.

"YEHRT"

(A short sharp sound) This sound is used defensively at the precise moment an opponent lands a strike or kick on your body.