



A Beginner's Guide to Kicking

Kicking Principles

Safety

Almost all of our kicks can be broken up into two general categories - thrust kicks, and whipping kicks. Some of these kicks, thrust kicks in particular require *attention to detail* to prevent injury. Thrust kicks are defined as kicks using a thrusting power generated from the leg. Examples of this are: heel kicks, cross kicks, side kicks, and later spinning back kicks. Three of the four thrusting kicks are all taught at a beginner level, so it is prudent we mention this now. Whenever we throw a thrust kick, we keep a slight bend in the knee similar to the elbow when we punch. This will prevent torn ligaments if we happen to miss a heavy bag, pad, or our sparring partner when throwing these, especially the bags and pads as we are specifically working on adding power to the kicks at this time so the cost of a mistake is greater than say sparring where we are more controlled and using less power.

Range

In mantis boxing we have multiple ranges we fight in. These are easy to define, harder to learn and intuit. When discussing these ranges, we should keep in mind 'critical distance - the range just outside our opponents longest weapon...their rear leg.'

The ranges are:

- S.S.S.G. Range - Sticks, stones, spears, and gun range. There is no fight here. We are waiting for our opponent to cross into our range, or we are aggressing their area of operation in an attack.
- Kicking Range - once we pass into critical distance, we are now in kicking range. We will continue to use kicks here until the range is increased or decreased by our opponent or ourselves.
- Striking Range - we now switch to striking with the hands. While we do have occasion to kick in this range, it is predominantly used for striking.

- E.K.G. Range - Elbow, Knee, Grappling range. At this level there are no kicks at this range, and even striking creates a plethora of liabilities. We are now focusing on the use of our elbows, knees, and clinch work to throws, trips, takedowns as our primary weapons in this range.

Effective Kick Targeting & Height

Each kick has very specific targets. At a beginner level, we never kick above the torso/abdomen. The following is a breakdown of each kick we'll be covering here, and the appropriate targets:

- Toe Kick - groin only.
- Heel Kick - torso, midsection.
- Cross Kick - knee.
- Side Kick - knee.
- Round Kick - outside and inside of the upper leg. Ribs.

Conservation of energy

Kicking requires far more energy than striking, and yet, the energy needed for kicking, is still much lower than grappling or ground fighting. So as a whole, we need to conserve as much energy as possible in case we need it for grappling. When throwing kicks we should reserve them for only when we are in the proper range. Use sparingly. The largest contributing factor to kick failure in martial arts, is executing them when we are out of range.

Rule of 1 - Balance

Some styles of martial arts, specifically those that are performance based, fire off multiple kicks without resetting the foot to the ground in between. While this is fanciful and impressive to watch, it is inadvisable in training reality based martial arts. We can throw multiple kicks, and sometimes this is the proper strategy as the opponent is outside of striking range. However, each kick should be followed by a return of the kicking leg, back to the ground. This can not only prevent balance fails, or allow us to prevent a rushing opponent, but offers the ability to adapt to the situation as it happens, rather than being stuck on one leg.

Kicking Strategy

For each of the kicks we learn at the beginner level, we will continue to use and perfect the following strategies to make them increasingly more effective.

Kick to Strike

The 'kick to strike' strategy is used to increase our offensive capabilities, as well as a safety measure for a missed, or ineffective kick. Once we execute a kick, if our opponent is still within critical distance, it is good practice for us to throw strikes. This **changes levels** making it harder for our opponent to defend our onslaught, and occupying their arms to play defense rather than striking us in the face after we enter.

Strike to Kick

Flipping the prior strategy around, this approach focuses on using strikes first, before we apply a kick. This becomes highly effective when an opponent breaks striking range, or steps back. It also allows for safer execution of the heel kick, preventing heel kick malfunctions that can lead to broken toes.

Kick to Enter

This strategy uses our rear leg kick to initiate an advance into the enemy position. It is less about the kick connecting, although that is always a bonus, and more about gaining entry on the opponent without getting hit.

Kick to Stop

Stop the advancing opponent with a kick to the leg, hip, or torso. This relies on highly adept use of focus principle (pretzel vision), critical distance spacing, and range awareness.

Basic Kicks

- Heel Kick
- Toe Kick
- Cross Kick
- Side Kick
- Round Kick