

KARATE TECHNIQUES

Fumio Demura Reveals How to Make 6 Types of Karate Moves Work Properly

by S.D. Seong • Photos by Sara Fogan



Fumio Demura is one instructor who insists that traditional martial arts like *shito-ryu* karate are every bit as effective as they've always been — provided they're taught properly. For the benefit of those students who have not trained under a master from the old school, the *Black Belt* Hall of Fame member, who was a *kumite* (sparring) champion in Japan from 1961 to 1964, offered us the following guidelines on how and when to use karate's six most effective hand techniques.



STRAIGHT PUNCH

Called *tsuki* in Japanese, the straight punch is the mainstay of karate. Contact is made with the first two knuckles of the fist. The technique can be used in a variety of self-defense situations and on a variety of targets.

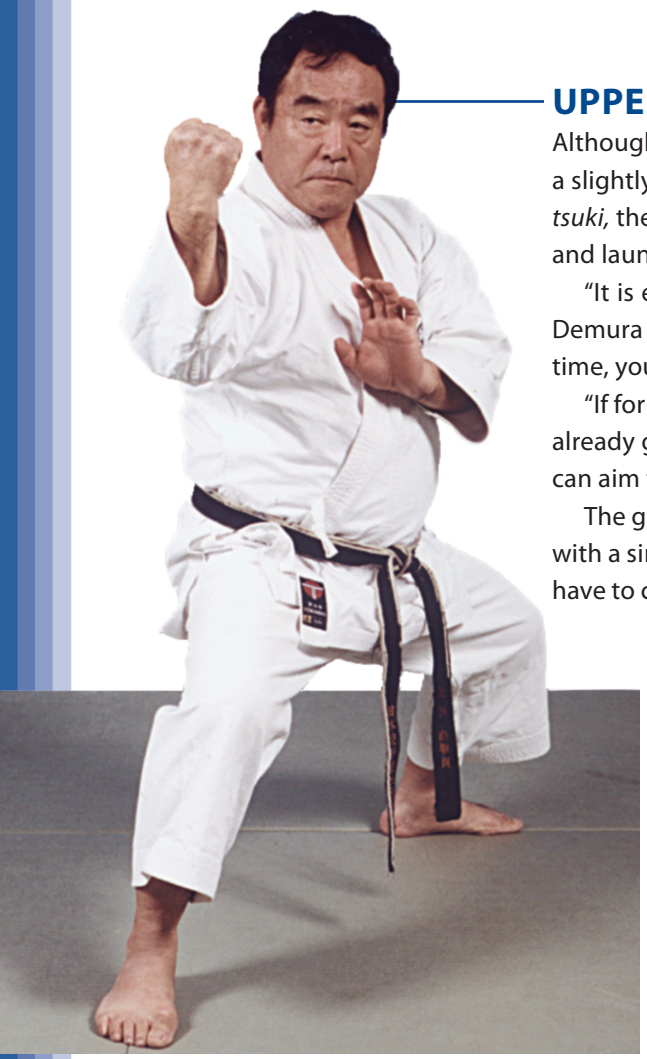
One of the more interesting applications of the straight punch involves using the motion of your striking arm to deflect an incoming attack, Demura says. "Halfway into the punch, your forearm is used to block. His punch goes by the side of your face as you strike his chin with your fist. The block and the punch happen at the same time. In case it doesn't work, your other hand can punch straight into his body."

Because you risk being counterattacked whenever you are within arm's reach of your opponent and your hands are occupied, you must pay attention to the angle and distance so you can stay away from his free hand, Demura says. "Then if it gets messy, you can punch a second time, a third time or a fourth time until you knock him out — as long as you are protecting yourself."

The key to making the straight punch work is practice, Demura says. If you simply throw the technique a few times in the *dojo* and then expect it to save your skin on the street, you're bound to get into trouble. "Especially for beginners, knowing the technique is not enough," he says. "You must have experience, and once you get some, you'll be able to punch even harder."

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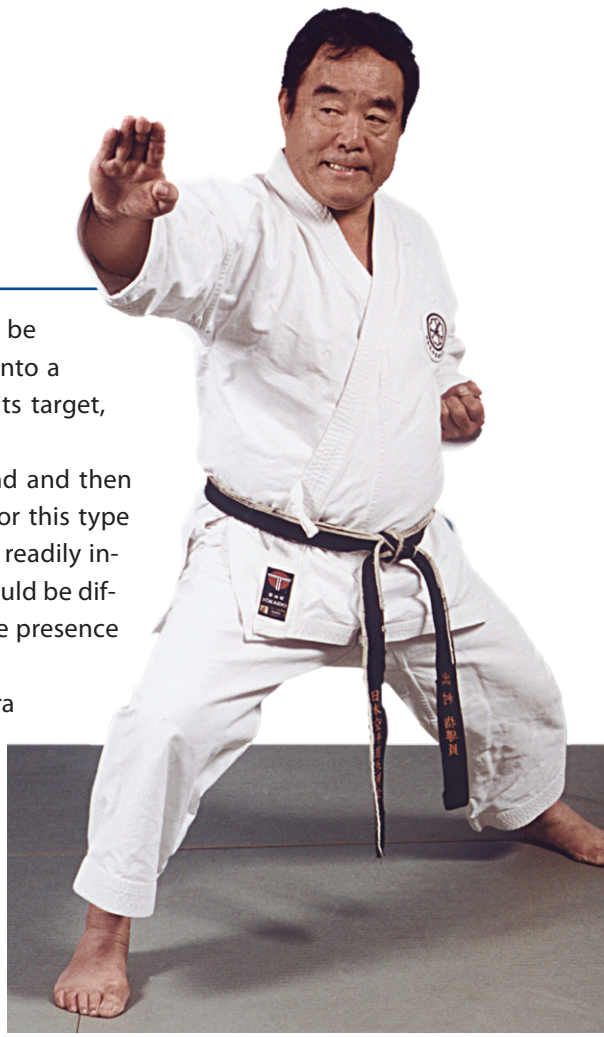
UPPERCUT

Although the uppercut is one of the "big four" weapons of Western boxing, it has a slightly less prominent but no less effective role in the karate dojo. Called *age tsuki,* the technique is aimed at the underside of your opponent's chin or nose and launched as soon as he gets within range and drops his guarding hands.

"It is especially effective when someone tries to punch you in the stomach," Demura says. "You block his arm downward using your palm heel. At the same time, your body drops down and your right hand rises up to his face to strike.

"If for some reason the uppercut doesn't work or you miss your target, you've already got your hand in position to continue into an upward elbow strike. You can aim for the nose or the chest."

The goal of the uppercut is not necessarily to KO an assailant or break a bone with a single shot, Demura says. "If one strike does not accomplish the goal, you have to continue without wasting any time. Don't stop after just one technique."



KNIFEHAND

The knifehand is called *shuto uchi* in Japanese. Your striking hand must be rigid and tense for it to impart maximum damage when you chop it into a vulnerable part of your opponent's body. It traces a circular path to its target, which is frequently the throat area.

"If the attacker tries to punch you, you can grab his punching hand and then strike his throat," Demura says. The knifehand is the perfect weapon for this type of situation, he adds, because its horizontal orientation allows it to be readily inserted into the narrow opening that leads to the neck. In contrast, it would be difficult to successfully throw a punch into the same space because of the presence of the chin.

The effect on the assailant is nothing short of devastating, Demura says. "Because the throat is one area you cannot make stronger, the knifehand can crush the windpipe. Sometimes the throat swells and breathing becomes difficult."

If something goes wrong — if the attacker raises his arm to stop your knifehand, for example — you have many options, Demura says. One is to open your fingers and go for his eyes. Another is to grab his hair and hold him while you deliver a follow-up strike or take him down.

INSIDE RIDGEHAND

Called *herabasami* in Japanese, the inside ridgehand employs the portion of your hand that lies between your thumb and index finger to strike and grab the assailant's throat.

One of the best times to use the inside ridgehand, which is also called the "tiger's mouth," is in response to a front kick, Demura says. "As soon as the attacker kicks, you step back and block his foot. If you can, you should hold his leg as you slam your other hand into his throat in one continuous movement. Then, as you squeeze, he won't be able to breathe."

If the assailant manages to survive the strike or escape from its grasp, you can simply raise his trapped leg. "When you go higher, his weight moves backward and he loses his footing," Demura says. "It is easy to knock him down."





FINGERTIP JAB

Japanese martial artists have named it *nukite,* while in the West it is referred to as simply the fingertip jab. No matter what you call it, it is a devastating self-defense technique that belongs in the arsenal of every martial artist. Just make certain you never use it when circumstances are anything less than dire, Demura says.

A type of two-finger spearhand strike, the nukite targets the soft areas of the body — such as the eyes and throat. As a close-range technique, it can be used to force an assailant to release you. For example, if he grabs your lapels with both hands, you can raise your hands as though you are giving up, then chop downward to buckle his arms and bring him in close. While one hand controls his forearm, you simply thrust the first two fingers of your free hand into his eyes.

"The nukite is great for the little guy," Demura says. "If your attacker is a big man and you punch him in the stomach, it might not work. But if you strike his eyes or throat using your fingertips, it is very effective. Your fist won't work to go to his eyes because it's too big, but the fingertips are perfect. When you hit his eyes, he won't be able to see for a while. You will have a moment to get out of the situation."

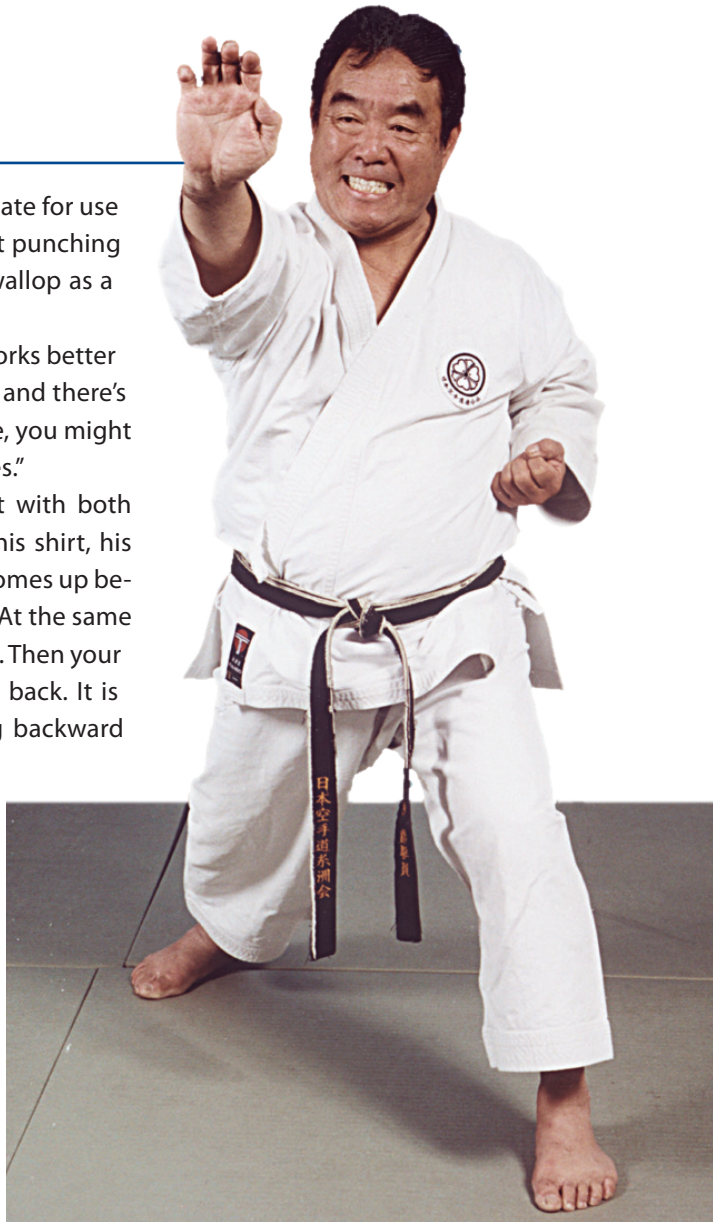
PALM HEEL

The palm heel — *teisho* in Japanese — is particularly appropriate for use by martial artists who are not accustomed to the stresses that punching inevitably places on the wrist. Best of all, it packs the same wallop as a punch while sacrificing only a few inches of range.

"For sensitive areas like the chin and nose, the palm heel works better than other techniques," Demura says. "It's hard to miss with it, and there's a lower risk of injuring yourself. If you punch an attacker's face, you might miss and hit his teeth, and that will probably cut your knuckles."

In a frontal attack, your opponent may grab your jacket with both hands, Demura says. "You should grab him, too — his belt, his shirt, his pants or whatever — with your left hand. As your right hand comes up between his arms, it pushes one arm higher and out of the way. At the same time, you pull him closer until he is almost touching your body. Then your right hand goes up to his nose or chin and pushes his head back. It is more painful because you are preventing him from moving backward with the force of the palm heel."

If you need to administer a bit of extra punishment, you can use your fingers to gouge his eyes and scratch his face, he adds. "And if you need even more, you can always continue with other strikes. If the fight goes one way, you have to be ready to do this. If it goes another way and you fall to the ground, you have to be ready to do a different technique. That's why you have to know so many techniques — so you are always able to protect yourself."





ELBOW SMASH

Although technically not a hand technique, the elbow smash *(hiji uchi* in Japanese) is among karate's most effective self-defense moves. It can be delivered by swinging your folded arm vertically upward, vertically downward, horizontally across your body to the inside or horizontally to the outside.

"The elbow is one of strongest bones in the human body," Fumio Demura says. "When you hit someone with it, there's a lot of damage. You can use it to strike the chest, stomach, face or back of the head — places where other techniques won't work."

The best way to amplify the effective power of the elbow smash, Demura says, is to restrain your opponent with your free hand so he can't move in the direction of your strike.

—SDS



Straight Punch: *Fumio Demura (right) faces his opponent (1). The opponent advances and punches (2), and Demura steps back and uses the preliminary motion of his arm to execute a halfway block (3). He finishes the technique by driving his fist into the other man's chin (4).*



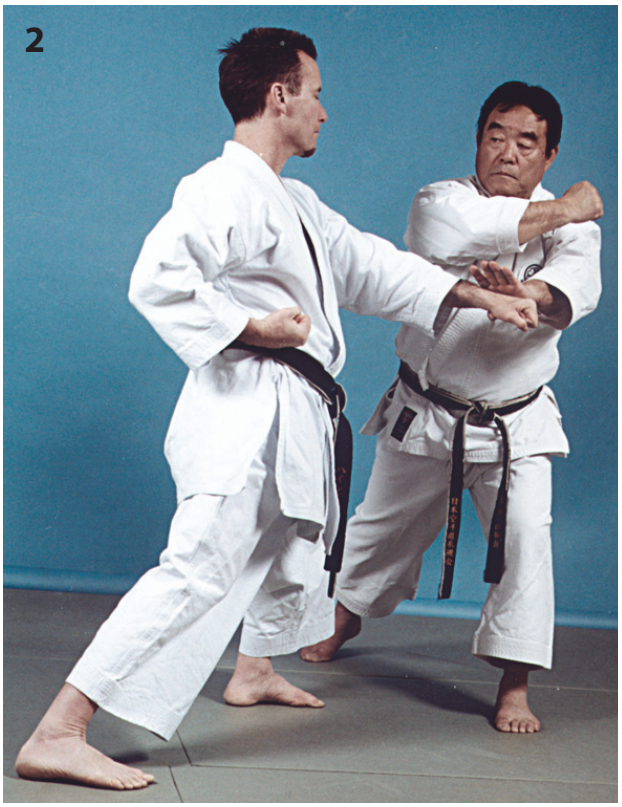


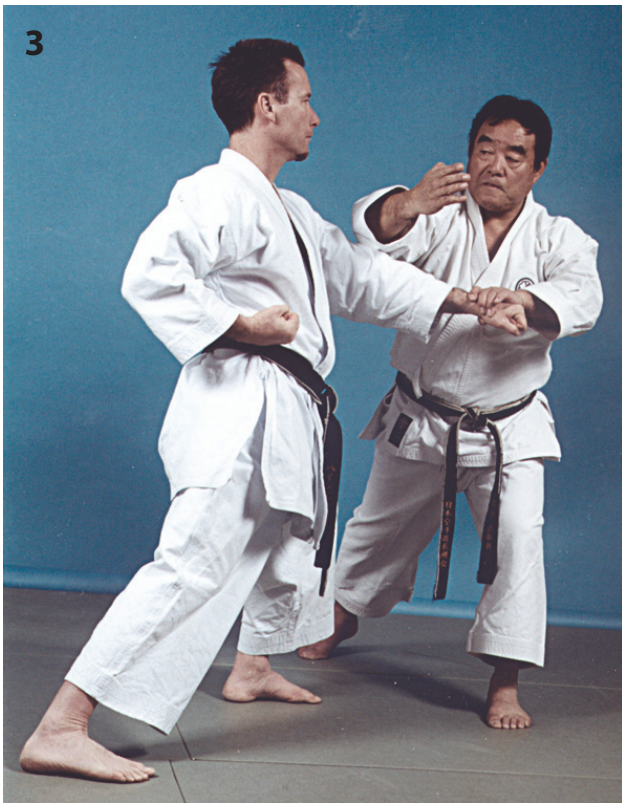


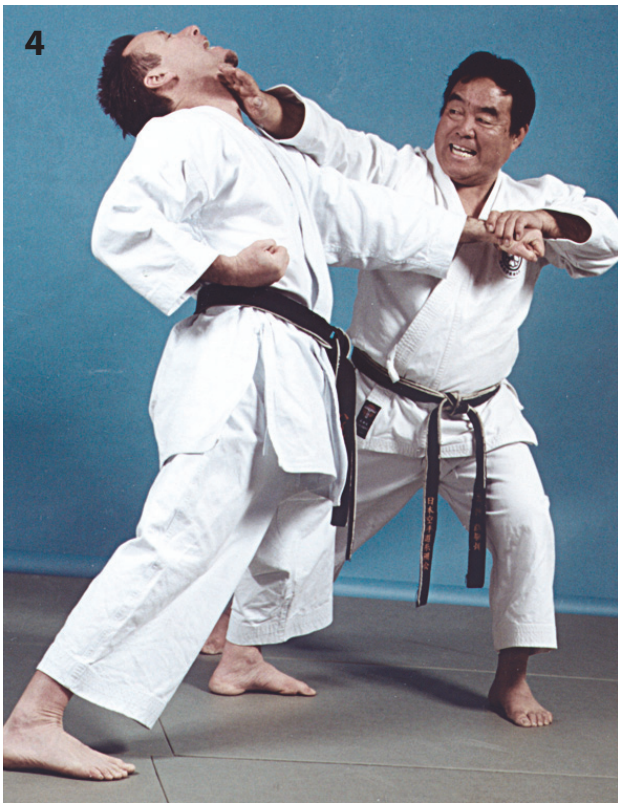


Inside Ridgehand: *The assailant (left) initiates his front kick (1), and Fumio Demura deflects the leg to the outside (2). The karate instructor traps the limb as he moves forward and readies his counterattack (3). Demura finishes the sequence by slamming his open hand into the assailant's throat (4).*









Knifehand: *The opponent (left) begins his punch, and Fumio Demura readies his defense (1). As the opponent thrusts his fist forward, Demura shifts his body and blocks it with his left hand (2). He maintains his grip on the other man's wrist (3) as he chops into his neck (4).*





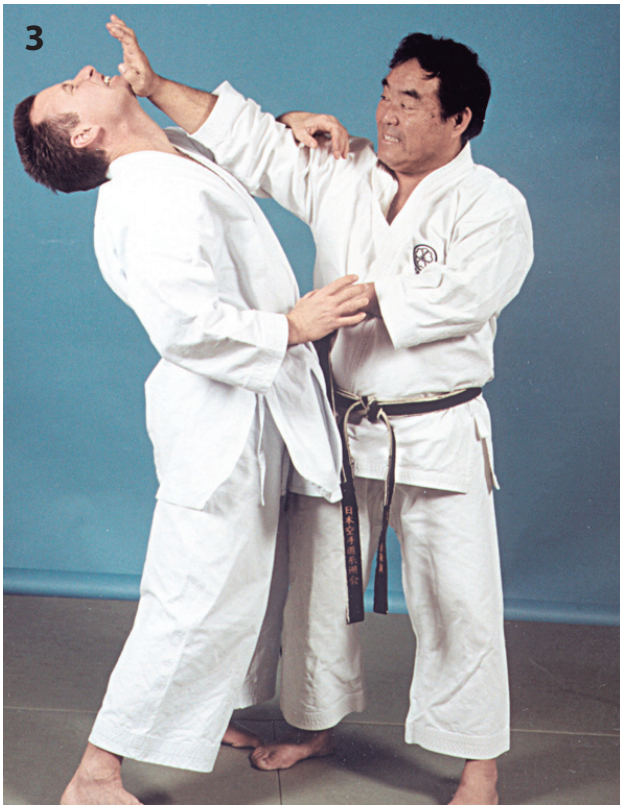




Uppercut: *Fumio Demura (right) and his partner square off (1). As the partner punches, Demura alters his stance (2) and swats the attacking arm downward with a palm heel (3). The karate master then blasts his uppercut into the partner's chin (4).*









Palm Heel: *The opponent grabs Fumio Demura's lapels (1). In response, Demura grabs the opponents belt with his left hand and lifts the opponent's left arm with his right (2). The karate master then extends his right arm, slamming his palm heel into the opponent's chin (3). If necessary, Demura can transition into an eye gouge or face rake (4).*





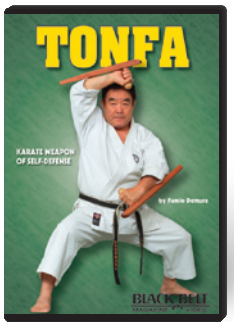




Fingertip Jab: *In response to a two-handed grab, Fumio Demura raises his hands in apparent submission (1). He then thrusts them downward to buckle the opponent's arms (2). While holding the other man's left arm (3), Demura jabs his fingertips into his eyes (4).*

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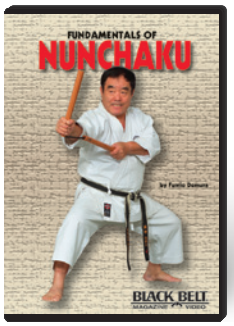


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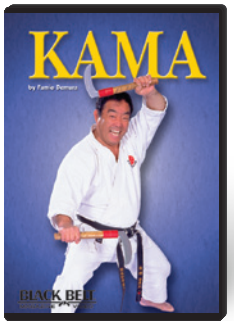


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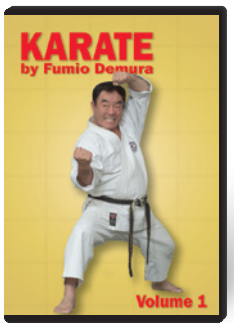


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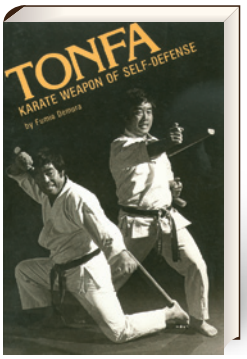


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