

Karate Terminology / Japanese Terminology

Age Uke - Upper block.

Age Tsuki - Rising punch.

Arigato Gozaimushita - Japanese for politely saying "thank you".

Ashi Barai - Foot sweep.

Ashi Waza - Name given to all leg and foot techniques.

Atemi Waza - Striking techniques that are used in conjunction with grappling and throwing techniques.

Awase Uke - Joined hand block.

Awase Tsuki - "U-punch". Punching with both fists simultaneously. Also referred to as Morote Tsuki.

Ayumi Dachi - A natural "walking" stance with the weight over the center.

Bo - Staff. A long stick used as a weapon (approximately 6 feet long).

Bogyo Roku Kyodo - "Six defense actions". A basic drill of the Japan Karate-Do Ryobu-Kai.

Uses the old names of techniques such as Age Te, Harai Te (or Gedan Barai), Soto Yoko Te, Uchi Yoko Te, Shuto Te, and Sukui Te.

Budo - "Martial way". The Japanese character for Bu (martial) is derived from characters meaning "stop" and (a weapon like a) "halberd". In conjunction, then, Bu may have the connotation "to stop the halberd". In Karate, there is an assumption that the best way to prevent violent conflict is to emphasize the cultivation of individual character. The way (Do) of Karate is thus equivalent to the way of Bu, taken in this sense of preventing or avoiding violence as far as possible.

Bunkai - A study of the techniques and applications in Kata.

Choku Tsuki - Straight punch.

Chudan - Mid-section. During the practice of Kihon Ippon Kumite (one step basic sparring), the attacker will normally announce where he/she will attack Jodan, Chudan, or Gedan (upper level, mid-level, or lower level).

Chudan Tsuki - A punch to the mid-section of the opponent's body.

Dan - "Level", "rank" or "degree". Black Belt rank. Ranks under Black Belt are called Kyu ranks.

Do - Way/path. The Japanese character for Do is the same as the Chinese character for Tao (as in "Taoism"). In Karate, the connotation is that of a way of attaining enlightenment or a way of improving one's character through traditional training.

Dojo - Literally "place of the Way". Also "place of enlightenment". The place where we practice Karate. Traditional etiquette prescribes bowing in the direction of the designated front of the Dojo (the Shomen) whenever entering or leaving.

Domo Arigato Gozaimashita - Japanese for "thank you very much". At the end of each class, it is proper to bow and thank the instructor and those with whom you've trained.

Ekku - A wooden oar used by the Okinawans which they improvised as a weapon.

Embusen - Floor pattern of movement in a given Kata.

Empi - (1) One of the Black Belt level Kata, translated as "The Flight of a Sparrow". (2) "Elbow", sometimes referred to as Hiji.

Fumikomi - "Stomp kick", usually applied to the knee, shin, or instep of an opponent.

Gankaku Dachi - "Crane stance", sometimes referred to as **Tsuru Ashi Dachi** and **Sagi Ashi Dachi**.

Gasshuku - A special training camp.

Gedan - Lower section. During the practice of Kihon Ippon Kumite (one step basic sparring), the attacker will normally announce where he/she will attack Jodan, Chudan, or Gedan (upper level, mid-level, or lower level).

Gedan Barai - Downward block.

Gedan Ude Uke - Low forearm block.

Gedan Tsuki - A punch to the lower section of the opponent's body.

Gi - (Do Gi) (Keiko Gi) (Karate Gi) Training costume. In most traditional Japanese and Okinawan Karate Dojo, the Gi must be white and cotton (synthetics with cotton allowed).

Go No Sen - The tactic where one allows the opponent to attack first so that targets are opened up for counterattack.

Gohon Kumite - Five step basic sparring. The attacker steps in five consecutive times with a striking technique with each step. The defender steps back five times, blocking each technique. After the fifth block, the defender executes a counter-strike.

Gyaku Mawashi Geri - Reverse round-house kick. Also referred to as **Uramawashi Geri**.

Gyaku Tsuki - Reverse punch.

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Hachiji Dachi - natural stance, feet about one shoulder width apart, with feet pointed slightly outward.

Hai - Yes.

Haishu Uchi - A strike with the back of the hand.

Haishu Uke - A block using the back of the hand.

Haito Uchi - Ridge-hand strike.

Hajime - Begin. A command given to start a given drill, Kata, or Kumite.

Hangetsu - A Black Belt level Kata.

Hangetsu Dachi - "Half-moon stance".

Hanshi - "Master." An honorary title given to the highest Black Belt of an organization, signifying their understanding of their art.

Hasami Tsuki - "Scissor punch".

Harai Te - Sweeping technique with the arm.

Harai Waza - "Sweeping techniques".

Heiko Dachi - A natural stance. Feet positioned about one shoulder width apart, with feet pointed straight forward. Some Kata begin from this position.

Heiko Tsuki - "Parallel punch". A double, simultaneous punch.

Heisoku Dachi - An informal attention stance. Feet are together and pointed straight forward.

Henka Waza - Techniques varied and many, dependent on the given condition.

Hidari - "Left".

Hiji - "Elbow", also known as Empi.

Hiji Ate - "Elbow strike". Also referred to as Empi Uchi.

Hiji Uke - A blocking action using the elbow.

Hiki-te - The retracting (pulling and twisting) arm during a technique. It gives the balance of power to the forward moving technique. It can also be used as a pulling technique after a grab, or a strike backward with the elbow.

Hitosashi Ippon Ken - "Forefinger knuckle".

Hiza Geri - "Knee kick".

Hiza Uke - A blocking action using the knee.

Hombu Dojo - A term used to refer to the central dojo of an organization.

Horan No Kamae - "Egg in the Nest Ready Position." A "ready" position used in some Kata where the fist is covered by the other hand.

Ippon Ken - "One knuckle fist".

Ippon Kumite - "One step sparring". The designated attacker attacks, after which the defender counter-attacks.

Ippon Nukite - A stabbing action using the extended index finger.

Jiyu Ippon Kumite - "One step free sparring". The participants can attack with any technique whenever ready.

Jiyu Kumite - "Free sparring".

Jo - Wooden staff about 4'-5' in length. The Jo originated as a walking stick.

Jodan - Upper level.

Jogai - "Out of bounds". Used in tournaments.

Juji Uke - "X block".

Jun Tsuki - The Wado Ryu term for **Oi-Tsuki**.

Kagi Tsuki - "Hook punch".

Kaisho - "Open hand." This refers to the type of blow which is delivered with the open palm. It can also be used to describe other hand blows in which the fist is not fully clenched.

Kake-te - "Hook block" or "Hooking technique".

Kake Waza - "Hooking technique".

Kakiwake - two-handed block using the outer surface of the wrist to neutralize a two-handed attack, like grab.

Kakushi Waza - "Hidden techniques".

Kakuto Uchi - "Wrist joint strike". Also known as Ko Uchi.

Kakuto Uke - "Wrist joint block". Also known as Ko Uke.

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Kamae - A posture or stance either with or without a weapon. Kamae may also connote proper distance (Ma-ai) with respect to one's partner. Although Kamae generally refers to a physical stance, there is an important parallel in Karate between one's physical and one's psychological bearing. Adopting a strong physical stance helps to promote the correlative adoption of a strong psychological attitude. It is important to try so far as possible to maintain a positive and strong mental bearing in Karate.

Kamae-te - A command given by the instructor for students to get into position.

Kappo - Techniques of resuscitating people who have succumbed to a shock to the nervous system.

Karate - "Empty Hand". When Karate was first introduced to Japan, it was called To-De. The characters of To-De could be pronounced; however, the meaning of To-De is Chinese Hand. There are also philosophical explanations of Karate (explained in Funakoshi's book, *Karate-Do Kyohan*, in detail. The above link to Funakoshi contains a brief summary of this information.

Karate-Do - "The Way of the Empty Hand". This implies not only the physical aspects of Karate, but also the mental and social aspects of Karate.

Karateka - A practitioner of Karate.

Kata - A "form" or prescribed pattern of movement. (It also means "shoulder.")

Keage - Snap kick. (Literally, kick upward).

Keiko - (1) Training. The only secret to success in Karate. (2) "Joined fingertips".

Kekomi - Thrust kick. (Literally, kick into/straight).

Kempo - "Fist law." A generic term to describe fighting systems that uses the fist. In this regard, Karate is also Kempo. In Chinese, it is pronounced "**Chuan Fa**".

Kensei - The technique with silent Kiai. Related to meditation.

Kentsui - "Hammer fist". Also known as **Tettsui**.

Kentsui Uchi - "Hammer fist stike". Also known as **Tettsui Uchi**.

Keri (Geri) "Kick".

Ki - Mind. Spirit. Energy. Vital-force. Intention. (Chinese = Chi) The definitions presented here are very general. Ki is one word that cannot be translated directly into any language.

Kiai - (1) A shout delivered for the purpose of focusing all of one's energy into a single movement. Even when audible Kiai are absent, one should try to preserve the feeling of Kiai at certain crucial points within Karate techniques. (2) Manifestation of Ki (simultaneous union of spirit and expression of physical strength).

Kiba Dachi - "Straddle stance". Also known as Naifanchi(n) or Naihanchi Dachi.

Kihon - (Something which is) fundamental. Basic techniques.

Kime - Focus of power.

Ki-o-Tsuke - "Attention". Musubi Dachi with open hands down both sides.

Kizami Tsuki - "Jab punch".

Ko Bo Ichi - The concept of "attack-defense connection".

Ko Uchi - "Wrist joint strike." Also known as **Kakuto Uchi**.

Ko Uke - "Crane block" or "arch block". Same as **Kakuto Uke**.

Kohai - A student junior to oneself.

Kokoro - "Spirit, heart". In Japanese culture, the spirit dwells in the heart.

Kubotan - A self-defense tool developed by **TAKAYUKI KUBOTA**. This tool serves normally as a key chain.

Koken - "Wrist Joint".

Kokutsu Dachi - A stance which has most of the weight to the back. Referred to in English as "Back Stance".

Kosa Dachi - "Crossed-Leg Stance".

Koshin - "Rearward".

Kuatsu - The method of resuscitating a person who has lost consciousness due to strangulation or shock.

Kumade - "Bear hand."

Kyoshi "Master Instructor." A Dan level in the sequence of Renshi, Kyoshi, and Hanshi.

Kyu - "Grade". Any rank below Shodan.

Kyusho Waza - Pressure point techniques.

Ma-ai - Proper distancing or timing with respect to one's partner. Since Karate techniques always vary according to circumstances, it is important to understand how differences in initial position affect the timing and application of techniques.

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Mae - Front.

Mae ashi Geri - Kicking with the front leg.

Mae geri Keage - "Front Snap Kick". Also referred to as Mae Keage.

Mae geri Kekomi - "Front Thrust Kick". Also referred to as Mae Kekomi.

Mae Ukemi - "Forward fall/roll".

Makoto - A feeling of absolute sincerity, which requires a pure mind, free from pressure of events.

Manabu - "Learning by imitating." A method of studying movement and techniques by following and imitating the instructor.

Manji Uke - A Double block where one arm executes Gedan Barai to one side, while the other arm executes Jodan Uchi Uke (or Jodan Soto Yoko Te).

Matte - "Wait".

Mawashi Geri - "Roundhouse kick".

Mawashi Tsuki - "Roundhouse punch".

Mawashi hiji Ate - "Circular elbow strike". Also referred to as **Mawashi Empi Uchi**.

Mawat-te - A command given by the instructor for students to turn around.

Migi - Right.

Mikatsuki Geri - "Crescent Kick".

Mokuso - Meditation. Practice often begins or ends with a brief period of meditation. The purpose of meditation is to clear one's mind and to develop cognitive equanimity. Perhaps more importantly, meditation is an opportunity to become aware of conditioned patterns of thought and behavior so that such patterns can be modified, eliminated or more efficiently put to use.

Morote Tsuki - "U-punch". Punching with both fists simultaneously. Also referred to as **Awase Tsuki**.

Morote Uke - "Augmented block". One arm and fist support the other arm in a block.

Mudansha - Students without black-belt ranking.

Mushin - "No Mind." The state of being that allows freedom and flexibility to react and adapt to a given situation.

Musubi Dachi - An attention stance with feet pointed slightly outward.

Nagashi Uke - "Sweeping block".

Naifanchi Dachi - "Straddle stance." Also referred to as **Naihanchi Dachi** and **Kiba Dachi**.

Naihanchi Dachi - "Straddle stance". Also referred to as **Kiba Dachi** and **Naifanchi(n) Dachi**.

Nakadaka ippon Ken - "Middle finger knuckle".

Nami-gaeshi - "Returning Wave." Foot technique found in Tekki Shodan to block an attack to the groin area. The technique can also be used to strike the opponent's inner thigh or knee, as well as to sweep an opponent's leg.

Neko ashi Dachi - "Cat stance".

Nihon Nukite - Two finger stabbing attack.

Nidan - Second Level, as in Second Degree Black Belt.

Nidan Geri - "Double kick".

Nukite - "Spear hand".

Nunchaku - An Okinawan weapon consisting of two sticks connected by rope or chain. This was originally used by the Okinawans as a farm tool to thrash rice straw.

Obi - A belt.

Oi-tsuki - "Lunge punch".

Onegai Shimasu - "I make a request" or "I ask of you..." This is said while bowing to one's partner when initiating practice, to the instructor at the beginning of training, or to anyone when asking a favor/request.

Osae Uke - "Pressing block".

Otoshi empi Uchi - An elbow strike by dropping the elbow. Also referred to as **Otoshi Hiji Ate**.

Oyayubi ippon Ken - "Thumb knuckle".

Oyo Waza - Applications interpreted from techniques in Kata, implicated according to a given condition.

Rei - "Respect". A method of showing respect in Japanese culture is the Bow. It is proper for the junior person bows lower than the senior person. Etiquette dictates that one should bow when entering the Dojo, when entering the training area, when greeting Sensei, when greeting a Black belt Budoka, when beginning or ending a training session with a partner, when beginning or ending a kata performance, and when someone bows to you.

Reigi - Etiquette. Also referred to as **Reishiki**. Observance of proper etiquette at all times (but especially observance of proper Dojo etiquette) is as much a part of one's training as the practice of techniques.

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Reinoji Dachi - A stance with feet making a 'L-shape.'

Rensei - Practice tournament. Competitors are critiqued on their performance.

Renshi - "A person who has mastered oneself." This person is considered an expert instructor. This status is prerequisite before attaining the status as Kyoshi.

Sagi ashi Dachi - One leg stance. Also referred to as **Gankaku Dachi** or **Tsuru Ashi Dachi**.

Sai - An Okinawan weapon that is shaped like the Greek letter 'Psi' with the middle being much longer.

Sanbon Kumite - "Three step sparring".

Sanbon Shobu - Three point match. Used in tournaments.

Sanchin Dachi - "Hour-glass stance".

Sashite - Raising of the hand either to strike, grab, or block.

Seiken - "Forefist".

Seiryuto - "Bull strike." A hand technique delivered with the base of the Shuto (Knife hand).

Seiza - A proper sitting position. Sitting on one's knees. Sitting this way requires acclimatization, but provides both a stable base and greater ease of movement than sitting cross-legged. It is used for the formal opening and closing of the class.

Sempai - A senior student.

Sen no Sen - Attacking at the exact moment when the opponent attacks.

Sen sen no Sen - Attacking before the opponent attacks. Preemptive attack.

Sensei - Teacher. It is usually considered proper to address the instructor during practice as Sensei rather than by his/her name. If the instructor is a permanent instructor for one's Dojo or for an organization, it is proper to address him/her as Sensei off the mat as well.

Shiai - A match or a contest (Event).

Shidojin - Formally recognized instructor who has not yet be recognized as a Sensei. Assistant Instructor. The Shidojin serves as the instuctor who teaches the technical aspects of Karate.

Shihan - A formal title meaning, approximately, "master instructor." A "teacher of teachers."

Shiko Dachi"Square stance". A stance often used in Goju-Ryu and Shito-Ryu.

Shizentai - "Natural position". The body remains relaxed but alert.

Shomen - Front or top of head. Also the designated front of a Dojo.

Shuto Te - Same as **Shuto Uke**. This name was used before the advent of sport Karate. Used to describe one of the techniques in Bogyo Roku Kyodo.

Shuto Uke - "Knife-hand block".

Sochin Dachi - "Immovable stance". Also referred to as Fudo Dachi.

Sokuto - "Edge of foot". This term is often used to refer to the side thrust kick.

Soto (ude) Uke - Outside (forearm) block.

Soto yoko Te - Same as **Uchi Ude Uke**. This name was used before the advent of sport Karate. Used to describe one of the techniques in Bogyo Roku Kyodo.

Sukui Te - Same as Sukui Uke. This name was used before the advent of sport Karate. Used to describe one of the techniques in Bogyo Roku Kyodo.

Sukui Uke - "Scooping block".

Suwari Waza - "Techniques from a sitting position."

Tai Sabaki - Body movement/shifting.

Tate Empi - "Upward elbow strike".

Tate Tsuki - "Vertical punch." A fist punch with the palm along a vertical plane.

Teiji Dachi - A stance with the feet in a 'T-shape.'

Teisho Uchi - "Palm heel strike".

Teisho Uke - "Palm heel block".

Tettsui Uchi - "Hammer strike". Also called **Kentsui**.

Tobi Geri - "Jump kick".

Tonfa - A farm tool developed into a weapon by the Okinawans.

Tsukami Waza "Catching technique." A blocking technique by seizing the opponent's weapon, arm, or leg. Used often for grappling techniques.

Tsuki - A punch or thrust (esp. an attack to the midsection).

Tsuru ashi Dachi - "Crane stance", also referred to as **Gankaku Dachi** and **Sagi Ashi Dachi**.

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Tuite - Grappling skills.

Uchi Deshi - A live-in student/disciple. A student who lives in a Dojo and devotes him/herself both to training and to the maintenance of the Dojo (and sometimes to personal service to the Sensei of the Dojo).

Uchi mawashi Geri - "Inside roundhouse kick".

Uchi (ude) Uke - "Inside (forearm) block".

Uchi yoko Te - Same as **Soto Ude Uke**. This name was used before the advent of sport Karate. Used to describe one of the techniques in Bogyo Roku Kyodo.

Uke - Block.

Ukemi Waza - "Breakfall techniques."

Ura Tsuki - An upper cut punch used at close range.

Uraken - "Back knuckle strike".

Ushiro empi Uchi - Striking to the rear with the elbow.

Ushiro Geri - Back kick.

Waza - Technique(s).

Yama Tsuki - "Mountain punch". A wide U-shaped dual punch.

Yame - "Stop".

Yasumi - "Rest." term used by the instructor to have the students relax, normally following a long series of drills.

Yoi - "Ready".

Yoko - "Side".

Yoko (geri) Keage - "Side snap kick".

Yoko (geri) Kekomi - "Side thrust kick".

Yoko mawashi empi Uchi - Striking with the elbow to the side.

Yoko tobi Geri - "Flying side kick".

Yudansha - Black belt holder (any rank).

Zanshin Lit. "remaining mind/heart." Even after a Karate technique has been completed, one should remain in a balanced and aware state. Zanshin thus connotes "following through" in a technique, as well as preservation of one's awareness so that one is prepared to respond to additional attacks.

Za-rei - The traditional Japanese bow from the kneeling position.

Zenkutsu Dachi - "Forward stance".

Zenshin - "Forward".

Zori - Japanese slippers.