
summary

BODY SHIFTING IN KARATE

GUY BOURGON - April 2020 - HACHIDAN EXAMINATION



Introduction

In our regular practice, we routinely use two (2) Japanese terms to describe the body shifting techniques (*UNSOKU*). They are the *YORI-ASHI* or *sliding step* and the *TSUGI-ASHI* or *shuffle step*. While researching this topic in books of my personal library or on the Internet, I realized there was a number of references that would help me to deepen my knowledge on the « *types of body shifting* » and to increase my Japanese vocabulary in my teaching.

SHIFTING UTILITIES

In karate, the body shifts allow to manage distance (*MA-AI*) , to avoid attacks, to access the personal space of the opponent, to brake the rhythm and tempo. The types of body shift are generally done by translation, by sliding, by rotation or a combination of these basic elements.

SPEED OF EXECUTION

The speed of execution allows to develop the long positions (*DACHI*), to improve the body musculature, to create good biomechanics (*KI*) allowing to acquire the basic strengths such as: translation, expansion, contraction, upward or downward impulse as well as the pendulum.

CONDITIONS OF BODY SHIFTS

Body shifts must be supple, fluid and quick. The head must remain at least at the same height relative to the ground. Consequently, when we move from one point to the other the feet get together and the knees are flexed. This allows to keep a good balance and to maintain a low centre of gravity while shifting the body.

TYPES OF BODY SHIFTING

The body shifting usually occurs in a straight line, with a change of axis, while turning and even while jumping. In the following pages I propose a description of each types of body shifting, of its Japanese terminology and I illustrate with photographs the direction of each movement with the hips, legs and feet.

- ❖ **AYUMI-ASHI** or forward step
- ❖ **HIKI-ASHI** or backward step
- ❖ **YORI-ASHI** or sliding step
- ❖ **TSUGI-ASHI** or stuffing step
- ❖ **JIKU-ASHI** or lateral pivot step
- ❖ **OKURI-ASHI and SASHI-ASHI** or double step
- ❖ **MAWARI-ASHI** or rotation on the front foot
- ❖ **USHIRO-MAWARI-ASHI** or rotation on the rear foot
- ❖ **YOKO-SASHI-ASHI** or crossover step
- ❖ **TOBI-KONDE** or leap step

EVASIVE TECHNIQUES

Body shifting is well described by the word « **TAI-SABAKI** » that means having control over your body in a way to avoid attack while at the same time initiating a counter-attack. The sidestepping/ dodging moves in karate are essential for a proper defense and to neutralise the opponents attacks by being strategically positioned to give effective blocks and counter-attacks.

Other combinations are required to properly master the « **TAI-SABAKI** » technique such as:

- wait until the last moment to retreat
- never block with power in a straight line
- retreat but use a side angle
- keep a proper distance (*MA-AI*)

SPARRING METHODS

- ❖ **GOHON KUMITE** or five steps sparring
- ❖ **SANBON KUMITE** or three steps sparring
- ❖ **IPPON KUMITE** or one step sparring
- ❖ **JIYU IPPON KUMITE** or one step free sparring
- ❖ **JIYU KUMITE** or free sparring

STRATEGIC APPROCHES

- ❖ **SEN NO SEN** or take the initiative from the start
- ❖ **GO NO SEN** or react to the action of the opponent
- ❖ **KOKORO NO SEN** or stop by the mind the opponent

CONCLUSION

As a conclusion, it is essential to grasp the importance of body shifting in the practice of martial arts because, all along this research, I have endeavoured to establish the fundamental principles, to define the many subtleties of each type of body shifting, to circumscribe the variety of evasive moves (*TAI-SABAKI*) through the basic techniques (*KIHON*), the *KATAS* and the combat strategies (*KUMITE*).