

03: Footwork

Footwork training features an essential contradiction. Combatively, you need to move with the minimum of effort and only just enough for your opponent to miss and waste his energy. However, to be really competent at footwork you have to do more than is necessary in the training stage so that you get to the point where your body loves to move. Most people in class would like to stand where they are, thus it's essential that you overdo the mobility thing in the beginning. This will also, of course, keep you very fit and is great exercise.

Therefore make sure that you exaggerate your use of footwork in training. Get to the point where you love to move and that this is your standard response when working the pads or shadow-boxing. Then, when fighting, you should make sure that you don't do too much, as sometimes closing one door just opens another. See this as first learning the skill, then refining the skill. Only use what you need.

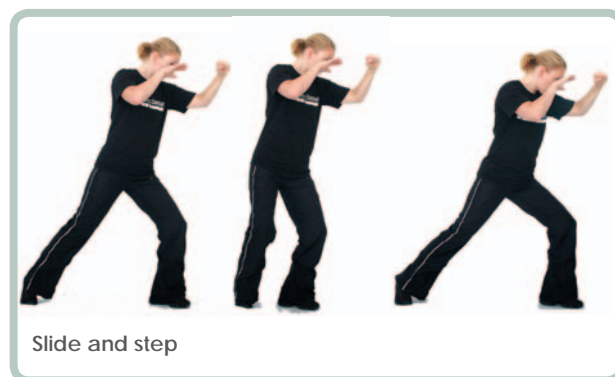
Boxing series footwork

Step and slide

The first type of footwork to learn is the step and slide. This is the standard way of adjusting your position in relation to an opponent so that you can stay at a consistent distance. This is normally the point at which you are at the end of his range and the beginning of yours and where both of you can hit with your hands if you take a step forward. You move the leg nearest to the direction you are going first, and slide the other one after it, so that you are back in your standard stance. This can be done forwards and back and left and right. Moving right is the most difficult and you have to take smaller steps – there are a number of other options for moving right that are more functional (see L step, p.26).

Slide and step

The slide and step can be used to maintain your range in relation to your opponent when the gap is slightly larger or you have to make up distance. Alternatively it's great when accompanied by strikes which hide the footwork. Slide your back foot up towards your front foot then take a step with your leading foot. When going backwards, slide the front foot back, and then take a step backwards with your rear foot. Don't bob up and down: keep your head at a constant level. A variation on this theme is to raise the closest leg like a crush or jamming technique. When going forwards it can be used to jam your opponent's attack attempt, and when going back it can be used to crush your opponent's attack or counter-attack.



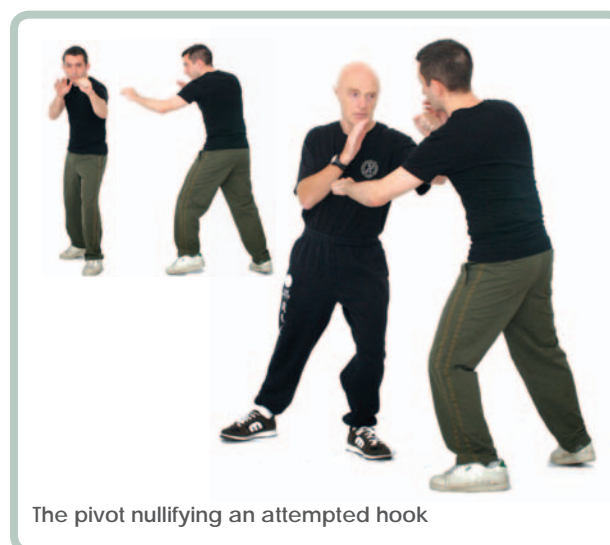
Shuffle bounce

By bouncing on your toes you will find it easy to go in any direction. You can't get huge changes in distance with this type of footwork unless you lunge in with the lead foot, which isn't difficult from here. The shuffle makes you light and elusive and makes it difficult for your opponent to know which direction you are going to go in.



Pivot

Fix your lead leg to the floor and pivot around it. It's incredible how functional this can be at close range as it destroys much of the body shifting that your opponent has worked so hard for. By pivoting you keep your tools focused on your opponent and withdraw yourself out of effective range of the attack. When going clockwise you can use both hand tools well; when going the other way the cross sometimes seems easier.



Lateral triangle

This is another type of footwork where one limb is fixed and you move around it. Used commonly in stick fighting and in Jun Fan, where it's called Toy Gerk, it works well as either a temporary adjustment or, when you move your lead leg out of harm's way, it can be made deeper and eventually lead to a stance change. As such there are about three depths at which you can do this. This can initially be seen as a technique but really it's about you reacting to your opponent's attacks and responding accordingly.

