

What does the Tae in Taekwon-Do really mean?

Taekwon-Do is well renowned and widely recognised throughout the World for its powerful but yet beautiful foot techniques. Taekwon-Do itself translates roughly to “The art or way of the foot and fist” but the name itself can be even further broken into the following:

“Tae” meaning to jump, kick or smash with the foot.

“Kwon” meaning to punch or destroy with the hand or fist.

“Do” means art, way or method

Within the Tae and the Kwon lies a vast array of techniques both offensive and defensive for the student to learn and master but the focus of this thesis is on the Tae or foot techniques.

Foot techniques can be used for both attack and defence. The foot techniques can then be further classified as piercing, thrusting, smashing, pressing, pushing, straight, sweeping, consecutive and flying kicks.

The origins of most of the kicks found Taekwon-Do can be found in the ancient art of Korean self-defence called Tae Kyon, which General Choi Hong Hi studied in his youth. Using Tae Kyon as a base the General developed the Tae side of Taekwon-Do where as Karate was used as the basis for most hand techniques or also known as the Kwon.

Common Principles of all Kicks

1. The maximum use of the knee spring of the stationary leg should always be employed.
2. To prepare oneself for the next motion and to prevent the leg from being grabbed, the kicking foot must be withdrawn immediately after the kick with few exceptions.
3. Body weight should be shifted to the kicking leg at the point of contact, then shifted back to the stationary leg.
4. A strong stance should be maintained with the stationary foot.
5. Once the kick to be delivered is decided, the body must be adjusted toward the target.
6. Do not allow the stationary foot to pivot at the moment of impact.
7. Never raise the heel of the stationary foot at the moment of impact.
8. The knee of the stationary leg must be bent slightly to maintain the balance at the point impact, except in the case of a pressing kick.
9. The range and point of focus must be calculated exactly. An adjustment must be made for the opponent who is either too close or too far from the attacker.
10. With few exceptions, every movement must begin with a backward motion to gain momentum, increasing mass and velocity.

Kicking Heights

High Kick

When the attacking tool reaches the same level as the attacker's eyes at the moment of impact it is called a high kick. Example vital spots can include the temple, nose or the jaw.

Middle Kick

When the attacking tool reaches the same level of the attacker's shoulder at the moment of impact it is called a middle kick. Example vital spots can include the solar plexus, floating ribs or the kidneys.

Low Kick

When the attacking tool reaches the same level of the umbilicus of the attacker at the moment of impact it is called a low kick. Example vital spots can include the knee joint, tibia and the inner thigh.

Kicking Terminology

Double Kick

The same type of kick is delivered twice in succession in the same direction with the same foot.

Triple Kick

Same as a double kick but the kick is delivered three times.

Consecutive Kick

Two or more kicks are executed in succession by the same foot in different directions and or with different tools.

Combination Kick

Both feet are used to deliver two or more kicks in succession.

Flying Kick

A flying kick is a kick when one jumps into air executing the kick with both feet off the ground. This is useful in attacking the high section, clearing obstacles and closing distances on opponents.

Skip kick

This is a kick used for closing distances on opponents that are out of range by performing a skipping motion. They are usually performed from a rear foot stance but sometimes from an L-stance. The skipping motion should not be more than a half shoulder width.

Dodging Kick

This is a kick used when an opponent is too close to effectively deliver a kick. The kick is performed while either flying or stepping away at the same time.

Types of Kicking

Smashing Kick

A Smashing Kick shares a similar purpose and method to that of a striking technique with the hand. This purpose is to break bones or muscles of a particular vital spot that the attack is delivered to.

Front Snap Kick

The Front Snap Kick is designed to attack an opponent at the front primarily with the ball of the foot as the attacking tool. Variations of the attacking tool can include the instep, toes and knee. In the case of using the toes as the attacking tool this is only normally done when wearing shoes.

The kick is generally performed to the Low or Middle sections and must not go above the attacker's solar plexus due to a loss of power. If one must kick above this and attack high section then the kick must be done in a flying motion.

The arms are usually raised in front while executing the kick but in some cases such as patterns they may retain the same position of the last technique.

Back Snap Kick

The Back Snap Kick is designed to attack an opponent to the rear without changing the direction of the stance.

The main attacking is the back heel while the target area is the scrotum. The attack mainly used to attack opponent who is holding from behind.

Turning Kick

The Turning Kick is used to attack an opponent to the front side or also known as the front 45 degrees. The kick can be performed to the low, middle or high sections and may attack any of the appropriate vital spots in these regions.

The main attacking tool is the ball of the foot, instep and knee. The toes can also be used if wearing shoes. The arms must form a guarding block in the direction of the kick.

A variation of the kick called the Side Turning Kick can be used to attack an opponent to the front.

Reverse Turning Kick

The Reverse Turning Kick is the reverse form of a Turning Kick to attack an opponent at the side rear or the back 45 degrees. It can be performed low, middle or high and attack any appropriate vital spots in these regions.

The main attacking tool is the back heel but the ball of the foot can also be used for extra reach. The effectiveness of the kick depends on maximum speed while turning.

Reverse Hooking Kick

The Reverse Hooking Kick is a variation of the Reverse Turning Kick and has dual purposes:

1. To Kick
2. To hook the opponent who moves in during execution of the kick.

Twisting Kick

The Twisting Kick is a very unique kick only found in Tae Kyon (where the kick originates from) and Taekwon-Do. The kick travels by the leg snaking outward and the foot turning over. The attacking tool is the ball of foot.

The kick can be delivered to 3 different directions depending on if it's low, middle or high.

The low kick attacks the front with the inner thigh as the main target area. The middle kick attacks the side front with the solar plexus, philtrum and scrotum as the main target areas. The high kick attacks the side rear with the face as the main target.

Downward Kick

The Downward Kick is used to attack an opponent to the front when an obstacle such as another person needs to be cleared. The main target area is the skull with the clavicle acting as a secondary target.

The main attacking tool is the back heel but the ball of the foot can be used also to attack the bridge of the nose.

This kick can also be useful for attacking the back of an opponent that is bent over.

Pick Shape Kick

The Pick-Shape Kick is a variation of the Downward Kick with the main difference being the kick goes up and down in a vertical line.

The kick is primarily used in harassing or keeping away the opponent.

Vertical Kick

The Vertical Kick is employed in attacking the target from a 90-degree angle with the attacking tool travelling in an arc.

The kick can be done in an inward or outward motion. The reverse foot sword is the attacking tool in the case of an inward kick and the foot sword in the case of an outward kick.

Pressing Kick

The Pressing Kick is designed to break the knee or the tibia and is divided into inward and outward kicks.

The Outward Kick attacks primarily the knee joint and the shin. The stationary leg must lock at the moment of impact and the body should lean slightly away. The attacking tool is a foot sword.

The Inward Kick is mainly executed against the fossa and occasionally against the inner or outer knee joints. The leg should be slightly bent at the moment of impact and the side sole is the attacking tool.

Piercing Kick

A piercing kick is similar to a punch in that its purpose is to cause internal damage or bleeding to the opponent. These kicks are considered to be the most powerful foot techniques in Taekwon-Do.

Side Piercing Kick

The Side Piercing Kick is used to attack opponents on the flanks. The attacking tool is the foot sword and the kick can be executed to the low, middle or high sections.

As the kick is executed it must travel in a straight line, the foot on the ground must pivot and the arm as the same side as the kick must execute a high punch.

Side Thrusting Kick

The Side Thrusting Kick is a variation of the Side Piercing Kick and executed in the same manner except the foot is extended with the toes pulled back exposing

the ball of the foot as the attacking tool. The extension of the foot helps provide more reach than the Side Piercing Kick.

Back Piercing Kick

The Back Piercing Kick is used to attack an opponent approaching from the rear with the foot sword used as the attacking tool. The kick has an advantage in that it can reach a long distance without needing to change stance.

Pushing Kick

A pushing kick is very different to other attacking kicks, as it is designed to just push an opponent away and not cause damage or harm to the opponent. The kick therefore has no power or acceleration behind it and only utilizes the attacker's mass to move the opponent.

Side Pushing Kick

The Side Pushing Kick is very similar to the Side Piercing Kick but without the power.

Back Pushing Kick

The Back Pushing Kick is very similar to the Back Piercing Kick but without the power and the attacking tool is changed to the back sole. The knee is also bent at the moment of impact.

Defensive Kicks

Foot techniques in Taekwon-Do aren't just limited to attacking techniques, a variety of defensive foot techniques exist as well. Advantages to blocking with the feet include extra reach and working in combination with hands for both attacking and blocking. Also the kicking foot does not have to necessarily withdraw immediately after the kick, this can be useful in the case when a counter attacking kick is executed with the same foot immediately after the defensive kick.

Front Rising Kick

The Front Rising Kick has dual purposes, firstly it can be used as a dynamic warm-up for the hamstrings and secondly as a block. When executed as a block it is used to block a technique delivered to the middle section or higher by using the ball of the foot as the blocking tool.

The kick springs up the opponent's punching fist by coming up under the forearm or the opponent's foot by kicking the inner tibia.

Side Rising Kick

The Side Rising Kick just like the Front Rising Kick has dual purposes, firstly as a dynamic warm-up for the Adductors and secondly as a block. When executed as a block it is used to block a technique delivered to the middle section or higher by using the foot sword as the blocking tool.

The kick springs up the attacking hand or foot. The body should be half facing the target at the start of the kick.

Front Checking Kick

The Front Checking Kick is used to restrict an opponent's freedom of movement as the opponent rushes or attempts to close in. The blocking tool is the back sole supported by the ball of the foot. The chest and solar plexus are the main targets.

Side Checking Kick

The Side Checking Kick can be used for two purposes. The first one is to block a low kick and the second is to impede or check an opponent's movement.

The side sole is the blocking tool and the tibia or knee area are the targets. The blocking tool should move in an arcing motion.

Hooking Kick

The Hooking Kick is similar to a hooking block and moves in a similar arcing motion. The target areas are the elbow joint or Achilles tendons. The blocking tool is the side instep.

Crescent Kick

The Crescent Kick is used for blocking a hand or foot technique to the middle section or higher and should reach the target in an arc.

The sole of the foot is the blocking tool. The elbow joint, Achilles' tendon and ankle joint are the main targets with the forearm and tibia acting as secondary targets.

Waving Kick

The Waving Kick is used to block an opponent's kick aimed at the scrotum and can be useful in preventing the foot been stamped on by the opponent. The side sole is the blocking tool and the ankle joint is the target.

For further reference or reading all of the contents of this Thesis and more about foot techniques can be found in the Encyclopedia of Taekwon-Do - Volume IV written by General Choi Hong Hi.

**Alex Lovell
III Dan
Taranaki TKD
Offered as a Thesis toward IV Dan**