

How do you make an effective technique?

Every karateka strives to make their techniques consistently powerful and effective. While precision in movement can be important, it is not the only factor that determines whether a technique is good. A successful punch may look simple and effortless, but there are a lot of factors that contribute to the execution of an effective technique.

To begin with, the karateka must have a solid foundation. An engineer knows a building must have a solid base to ensure the highest floors are stable. A karateka knows without a strong stance their upper body will be unstable and less capable. In Shotokan karate the power for all techniques begins with connection to the floor. The drive created from a proper stance and movement will greatly enhance the effectiveness of a technique.

Another contributing factor is proper muscle engagement. Shotokan uses the expansion and contraction of opposing muscles to create strong and fast movements. Often (but not always) a good way to check whether you're performing a technique correctly is to notice whether you have the maximum amount of muscle engaged when tensing the body parts involved in the movement. This is not to imply that those with more muscle mass will create better techniques. Good form and efficacy in movement is attainable regardless of bulk. Correct interconnection and use of muscle squeeze and release will result in a more effective attack or block.

One of the more obvious keys to successful technique is target. A technically correct punch is useless if it isn't directed towards a vulnerable area or worse, misses the intended target. Also important and related to this is distance. A karateka must know their own reach as well as which techniques are most and least effective given their distance to the opponent. A thrust kick is not a good choice when the adversary is very close, just as an elbow attack will not be effective from a distance.

There is also something to be said for the speed and timing of a technique. A sloppy but fast punch will beat a slow and technically sound punch every time. A block that is made too early or too late leaves the defender open to attack. A karateka should try to feel and calculate their opponent's timing so that their punches are delivered during openings and blocks are made once the opponent has committed to their attack. A poorly timed or slow technique, even if executed perfectly, will not be effective.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, an effective technique is made with intent and focus.

While a lot of karate has to do with physical training, the mind must be engaged as well. When performing an attack or block the mind should focus wholly on finishing the technique. This type of intent is known as *ikken hissatsu*, or "one hit, one kill". For one to think of their next few moves, or of just going through the motions, or of what they had for breakfast will result in an inferior technique. Each attack should be made with intent; any other thought is a distraction and hindrance to effective technique.