

# Ving Tsun Kick's

## Footwork strategy in Ving Tsun Kung Fu



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**Fighters often think it's 'cool' to kick well and, therefore, train this frequently. It looks more impressive than punching and shows more acrobatics and flexibility. Maybe people are also inspired by films. Fighting then becomes not only about eliminating your opponent, but also about receiving praise from the on-lookers. This is very different in Ving Tsun and is solely about fighting as effectively as possible, regardless of how the crowd thinks it looks. What someone thinks is pretty is a matter of taste anyway, so it can't really be debated. Effectiveness can. Ving Tsun was developed with one thought in mind: surviving a fight. Perhaps fighting in Ving Tsun seems less spectacular or beautiful, but is it well-directed. We should strive to look beautiful at the end of a fight.**

Footwork in Ving Tsun has very important functions: mobility, balance, power support for punching and kicking. Footwork plays an important role in 'hunting down' or applying pressure on your opponent. Mobility is especially used for an opponent that is looking to kick, by moving forward and backwards. By shooting forward like an arrow and punching with the hands, an opponent will lose the space necessary to kick and will not be able to punch powerfully since he will be standing on one leg. That is not to say that you should rush it at all moments, but the feel for timing needs to develop to be able to choose your moment and use the opportunities to their fullest.

Mobility is important in Ving Tsun Kung Fu to be in as good a state as possible to reposition and fight at the same time. In the beginning Ving Tsun seems quite static, but on an advanced level it is very dynamic. By continuously moving without wasting energy unnecessarily it will be more difficult for an opponent to attack. By staying mobile, an opponent will have a moving target. "A sitting duck will be shot".

## What's more effective: kicking or punching?

The fighting methods in Ving Tsun Kung Fu are largely made with the hands. This is a very conscious choice for mobile, economical and efficient attacks. Ving Tsun has been called 'in-fighting', or boxing from less than an armslength. Using the hands more than the legs is also more natural. People do practically everything with their hands. Why, when it comes to fighting, would you suddenly want to do so much with your feet? It is actually quite unnatural to take so many risks by frequently attacking with your legs. What are the actual advantages and disadvantages of kicking?

### Advantages of kicking:

- **reach** : to strike from a greater distance since the legs are longer than the arms
- **power** : hit potentially harder since leg muscles are larger and more powerful than arm muscles

### Disadvantages of kicking:

- **mobility** : cannot attack and move at the same time
- **control** : you are more vulnerable when you miss a kick than when you miss a punch
- **balance** : less stability than with punching, where you have both feet on the ground
- **adjusting** : during a kick you stand on one leg, and cannot adjust your distance
- **continuity** : kicks cannot be repeated after each other as quickly as punches
- **speed** : leg muscles are larger and stronger than arm muscles and thereby slower / arms are 'trained' more frequently during every-day activities

The summary isn't complete, but what is clear to the Ving Tsun practitioner is that the list of cons is much longer than the pros. This also means that these points will be advantages to your opponent when you kick. In Ving Tsun we keep our feet on the ground as much as possible. That is not to say that we don't use kicks. But we only kick when we are as good as certain that we can hit our opponent cleanly. Kicks can best be used when you expect a 80% chance of hitting. More so than with punching, we don't want to give our opponent any opportunities.

Some fighters kick to keep an opponent at a distance or they themselves try to attack from a distance. This has a big disadvantage. The thought process is focused on avoiding a fight or delaying it. It is less effective when the goal is something other than injuring your opponent and it is also more dangerous. Distance and reach apply to both you and your opponent. To be able to hit you must take a risk. When your distance is such that you can be hit by your opponent, than you can hit him too. If you kick while he is out of reach in order to keep him at a distance, then you also cannot hit him. Also you need to put your foot back on the ground as quick as possible before he makes use of a weak moment where you have made a superfluous action and are standing on one leg. Making fewer mistakes than you opponent will provide opportunities.

When you kick, you opponent may sometimes push his lower body backwards in order to get out of the dangerzone. Untrained people do the same, but as a flinch. This is probably the result of millions of years of evolution to protect these fragile parts. This way you may not be able to reach your opponent, but he is then out of position since he is hunched over forward. This is an excellent moment to strike with your hands, assuming you are in a good position. By keeping your own body straight when kicking, you will be able to quickly move forward and punch to take advantage of the situation. Do not fake a kick in order to make your opponent flinch. The goal is always to hit when kicking. Developing a good feel for distance can save a lot of energy, which you will need to kick or punch hard. It will be damaging to your opponent's confidence if he misses several kicks in a row by misjudging the distance. Psychological pressure can be used by showing him that you are unimpressed. In competitions, this effect is amplified by the presence of the audience and "his own fanclub".

Blocking kicks in Ving Tsun is not recommended since it is dangerous to have your opponent dictating your moves. When you automatically use your legs to block every kick from your

opponent, you will be standing on one leg, just as he is, and you will not be able to take advantage of the situation. Instead of blocking with your legs, you can play with the distance by moving backwards to stay out of reach of the kick or moving forwards to deprive him of the room he needs to kick. When the distance is such that you can hit, you must “take care of business” or move backwards, but do not hesitate or wait.

In Ving Tsun, you kick low! If you think further from the above text it shouldn't surprise you that we are no fans of high kicks. With a high kick, your foot has to travel a longer distance, presenting an unnecessary risk. Why hit a target with your foot when your hands are much closer? A kick to the head is of course very effective, but the chance of hitting the head with your feet is much lower than with your hands. A kick to the head is as illogical as a punch to someone's foot. The distance that the “weapon” has to cover to the target is about the same. Kicking targets in Ving Tsun are for example: ankle, shin, knee, and groin. The rule is that the kick is seldom made higher than your own stomach. The major advantage is that your (upper) body can remain upright and can immediately punch thereafter, without having to first bring your body back into position.

Kicks in Ving Tsun are always straight. “Round kicks” or first turning your body to kick do not fit into the economy of the system. Just as in punching, kicks are delivered in a straight line to the target. The straight line results of course in speed since the path the foot follows will be shorter than by other paths. Side-ways kicking can be used when you have been knocked out of position or against multiple opponents. You react to the situation and kick side-ways because your opponent is there, and because you can't reach him with punches.

A physical advantage in training kicks is that you must develop balance. By standing on one leg, your balance is forced to improve. The standing leg trains more than normal since it has to work twice as hard. This development alone makes results in an increase in balance and power when both feet are firm on the ground.

Fighting is not just a game or sport since you run the risk of serious injury. It is chaos, and more complex than is normally presented by trainers. My advice is: when you are up to your ears in this 's\*\*t', you shouldn't be standing on one leg. When you have no protection, punches to your face are very dangerous and you mustn't give your opponent any possibilities. Kicks are actually trained very seriously in Ving Tsun. A big difference with other martial arts is that we do not allow students to kick during sparring early in their education. We want to teach them to keep their feet on the ground first, even when their opponent wants to kick. This way they stay mobile and their opponent does not dictate what they do. Only once a student has developed sufficient skills with his hands, timing, and fell for distance, can kicks be added to the mix. Kicks in Ving Tsun are trained in the forms, on the punching bag, on the dummy (special training apparatus for Ving Tsun), and lastly in sparring.



**Photo: Exercise for balance and power**

Usually frontal kicks are made in Ving Tsun. Holding the position of the body at the moment of impact for a longer period is an exercise to develop balance and power in the legs. Start by holding the position for 30 seconds and work up to several minutes. Both legs should be bent, and the kicking leg should be horizontal. When you practice this in front of the mirror, you must be able to see the soles of your shoes. If you hold your arms bent up against your body, you won't be able to use them to correct your balance. If you need to use your arms to keep your balance, then you really don't have any balance.

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