



*Yoko Geri Kekomi
(Side Thrust Kick)*

by Sho Dan candidate

David Kett

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INTRODUCTION

Striking is the most universal way of inflicting damage to an aggressor. From an early age we naturally protect ourselves by striking out with our feet and arms. Whether it is an aggressive dog or an animate object you have become frustrated with, we have an inbuilt self-preservation to strike out. The term “striking” in martial arts generally refers to stand up fighting, which excludes throws or any other restraint holds. Whilst the application of “striking” appears to be very simple to the naked eye, there is a lot of practice and technique involved in order to make it effective and successful. Striking can be done by various parts of the body for example, fist, elbow, palm, knees, and shin. The aim of this paper is to provide a broad overview of the Side Thrust Kick technique (Yoko Geri Kekomi) used within Jujitsu, and various other fighting arts such as Karate and Tae Kwon Do.

SIDE THRUST KICK

A side thrust kick is a strike with the foot, either with the side of the foot or the heel. The side kick is one of the most powerful kicking techniques, because it uses all of the body's momentum in delivering the blow. The legs are several times stronger than the upper body and able to generate more force than other parts of the body. This kick is directed through the foot, delivering an effective side kick that involves the whole body, creating momentum and force whilst keeping good balance. According to Newton's Second Law, “Force = Mass times Acceleration”. Generally speaking, a smaller person has quicker acceleration than a larger person and is able to generate a substantial amount of force by focusing on the speed element of their attack. For a bigger person they are able to generate force by focusing on their mass. The more force there is, the greater the damage that will be inflicted on the aggressor. Like all blows delivered against an attacker, if you do not have balance when delivering the blow, you will not achieve the full potential of the attack and will risk putting yourself in a position of disadvantage.

GENERAL ASPECTS OF THE SIDE THRUST KICK TECHNIQUE

Unlike punching techniques, which are executed with both feet on the ground, there is only one supporting leg when kicking. The supporting leg must be bent and in the correct position for a side kick. The supporting foot's heel should be pointing at the target, for balance and to create the maximum amount of force and prevent injury.

For jumping/flying side kick (*yoko-tobi-geri*), the principles and set up for a jumping side kick are the same. If in a side left front stance, step or skip forward with your right foot, flexing your knee sharply. Spring off the ground, raising your left knee high.

While in the air, thrust the side edge of your left foot to the target, withdraw your feet quickly and land in the left front stance fighting position.



Heel pointing towards, and relaxed upper body

When punching with your right arm there is an opposite action with your left arm. The right arm and fist are moving forward, while the left arm is withdrawn towards the body. A similar movement is applied when executing a kick.



If we look at this further you are actually creating power from the ground up, by building momentum up through your legs, hips, shoulders and arms you can execute the blow to your desired target.

This is also true for kicking techniques. With the side thrust kick you are pushing up through your bent supporting leg with your heel pointing at the target loading your kicking leg by bringing the knee up, like if you were standing and going to stomp on the ground. The whole body becomes involved in delivering a good kick, so you must not forget about the upper half of your body and what it is doing in relation to the lower half of your body. We are trying to create the minimum amount of effort with the maximum effect.

Your torso needs to be in an upright position and relaxed. Students can struggle with the side thrust kick as they try to kick higher than their flexibility allows them to. Students often incorrectly lean backwards to gain more height, therefore making the kick ineffective, as well as leaving them in a position of poor balance, and an easy target to be attacked. If a student does not have good flexibility, they can still deliver good side kicks! Remember that there are plenty of lower extremity target areas that may be attacked - the knee, groin and pressure point targets in the upper thigh, that most of us have experienced from getting a "dead leg".

LEARNING THE SIDE THRUST KICK WITH GOOD TECHNIQUE

Introducing sidekicks to new students can be a daunting proposition, particularly for a student who has not used their legs for self-defence.

Keeping the goal of learning side kick simply, is the key. Points to remember are:

- **Good body position** – supporting leg bent with the heel of the supporting leg pointing at the target.



- **Loading the leg that we are kicking with** – good high knee, lift ready for the leg to explode forward towards your target, using a powerful rotation of your hips to propel your foot forward.
- **Do not forget the importance of the upper body** - keeping the torso upright and the arms up for protection.
- **Balance** - expanding the arms as the leg is propelled forward, like a person walking on a tight rope, arms out for balance.
- **Relaxation** in performing the technique; the more relaxed the muscles are the more power we can create, plus we are not wasting energy by tensing up.
- **Kiai** is a spirited yell given at the moment a technique comes to its conclusion. It also helps to focus energy at the moment of impact. It also can have a psychological effect, both on the performer and on their opponent.
- **Visualization** is an important aspect of learning a side kick. The student needs to visualize their opponent, the target area and the successful kick when training and self-correct bad technique. Visualization is very important when learning a side kick without opposition or uke.



Fighting stance



Loading the kicking leg ready to expel force towards the target.



Grounded foot heel pointing at target, relaxed upper body

A side thrust kick may be performed from any fighting stance, front fighting stance, and side stance but at the point of contact the attacker must be in a side-on position to the person being attacked.

The side thrust kick can be learned as a drill by numbers:

- 1- Side on stance with heel pointing to the target - supporting leg bent.
- 2 - Loading of the kicking leg (lifting knee to a high position- the loaded position) with your foot close to your supporting knee.
- 3 - Expanding the leg to the target area, using the powerful rotation of your hips to propel your foot to the target, while expanding the arms and staying relaxed.
- 4 - Withdrawing the leg and returning to the side stance or front fighting stance position.

Completing the drill, like learning throws or ground holds, requires lots or repetitive practice. By repeating the drill, students will improve balance, flexibility, and overall technique.



As a lot of power can be created, a solid contact point for the attacker is the side edge of the foot, although the heel may be used as well. The toes should be pulled back to avoid first contact and possible injury.

PARTS OF THE FOOT USED IN KICKING TECHNIQUES

| <u>Kicking Technique</u> | <u>Part of the foot used</u> |
|---|------------------------------|
| Front kick, <i>mae-geri-keage</i> | Ball of foot, instep, |
| Side thrust kick, <i>yoko-keri-kekomi</i> | Side edge of foot |
| Back kick, <i>ushiro-geri</i> | Heel, Sole of Foot |
| Roundhouse kick, <i>mawashi-geri</i> | Ball of Foot, Instep |
| Knee kicks, <i>hitsu-geri</i> | Point of Knee |

A side thrust kick may be performed from the lead leg or rear leg, thus making it great for creating space or closing the distance down quickly with a powerful attack.

- The front leg is delivered from the front or side stance with the front leg/ lead leg. It is performed by shifting the weight to the supporting or rear leg and delivering the strike with the front leg; not a lot of distance is covered and is suitable for an advancing opponent.
- The side snap kick (*yoko-geri-keage*) is a close range technique used against an opponent positioned to one's side. To perform the basic side snap kick, bring your knee high to the side, with the kicking foot placed near your supporting knee. In this position your foot is held straight with your toes bent upward so that the side edge of your foot may be used as the striking surface. The side edge of your foot is then snapped outward to the target and immediately returned to your knee area and then to the floor. This is done in one smooth motion. As you snap your foot outward, rotate your hips in the direction of the kick, to add to the force.



Watching your opponent in side fighting stance turning with minimum time with back to the opponent, heel pointing at target.

- The rear leg side thrust kick is delivered in the same manner as a front leg, except delivered in a circular motion by rotating on the lead leg on the ball of the foot with the heel pointing at the target and loading the rear leg as you turn into the kick and deliver the strike.



Completing the kick and then returning to a fighting stance

- Skipping in to close the distance - is where the kick is performed with the lead leg but we have skipped in to close the distance. The rear leg is placed in a similar foot position to the throw Uki Goshi forming a 'T' with the heel pointing at the target.
- Jumping Side Kick (yoko-tobi-geri) taking off on one leg, getting airborne and striking with the leg that was not used in the takeoff.

TARGET AREAS

Some of the more common target areas for side thrust kicks are the knees, ribs, stomach, and solar plexus. The more competent kickers can look at throat, jaw line, and nose as other target areas.



CONCLUSION

The side thrust kick can be an attacking kick or a defensive kick to keep your opponent at a safe distance. It can be one of the most powerful striking techniques that are used within various martial arts. Although the side thrust kick may be limited to mid to long range, their explosive energy component generally makes it one of the most effective and efficient mid to long range techniques.

As with all techniques, practice - practice - and more practice - will make this kick an important part of your self-protection arsenal.

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