



## AUXILIARY EXERCISES

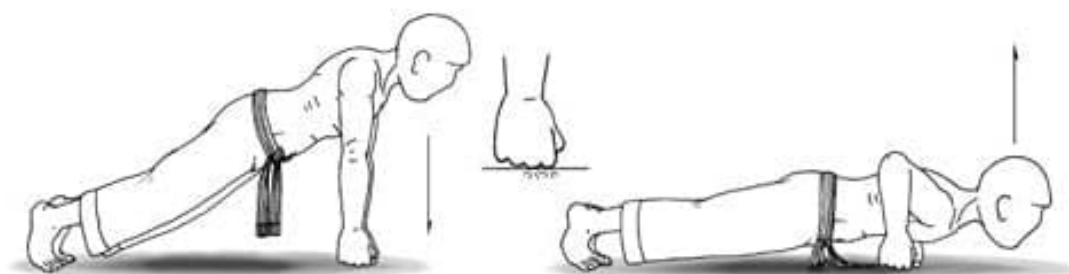
### Hojo Undo Exercises Without Tools

These exercises are not usually done during the course of a regular training session, although of course they could be. If the lifting and impact tools prove difficult to obtain at first, it is possible to begin strengthening the body by spending time doing the following drills. As always, however, caution and common sense need to be exercised when lifting your training partner. Although not as stressful to deal with as the tools, these exercises do offer resistance and help build strength and stamina, timing, and coordination. *Hojo undo* is a training method best suited to people older than sixteen years of age, and while the human body and mind still have some way to go at that age before reaching maturity, with vigilance and careful practice a young adult may find benefit from engaging in a limited form of *hojo undo* training; if this is the case, then some of these exercises are perhaps the best way to start.

What follows are twelve of the exercises we work on during the twice-yearly *gasshuku* at my *dojo*. The list should not be thought of as the only alternatives to working without the tools. They represent no more than a sample of the many exercises we do to prepare the body for the long hours of *karate* training ahead. They can be fun to do, too, of course, although you should never let levity creep too far into training, because dropping your guard in regard to safety provides fertile ground for accidents and injuries. Training partners should ideally be of similar build and weight, and because of the close nature of

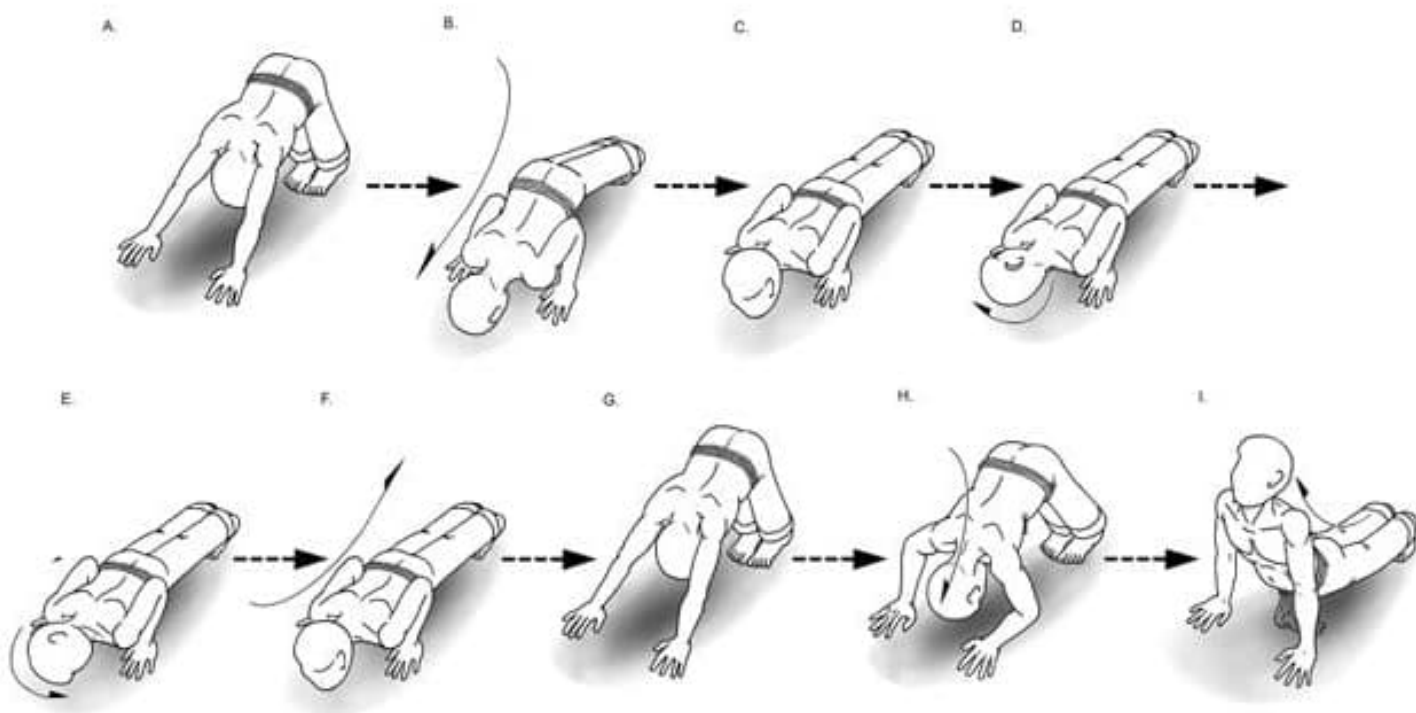
The word *gasshuku* means to live or lodge together for a time. In Japanese martial arts, *gasshuku* are, or were, a normal part of the training calendar, and could last as short as a weekend, or as long as two weeks. The purpose of *gasshuku* is to bring students out of their regular life for awhile to concentrate solely on their training. Also, the shared experience of so much training over a relatively short period of time, of eating, cleaning, and sleeping, and of having to exercise patience and show consideration to others is a very important life lesson that many find to be the most difficult part of attending a *gasshuku*. Although not strictly part of Okinawan *karate* tradition, I hold two *gasshuku* each year, one in April and another in October. They mark the month of Chojun Miyagi's birth (April 25, 1888) and the month of his death (October 10, 1953), and they allow me to offer my gratitude and show my appreciation to him for the efforts he made during his lifetime. Without his endeavors, my own life would have been totally different.

some of the drills, training partners should always be of the same gender unless otherwise agreed upon by the female. No figures are given here for the number of times each exercise should be done. The amount of repetitions depends on the fitness level of those doing the training. Too many can lead to injury; and too few to a waste of effort and nothing to show for it. As with all martial arts training, we should work to a level that provides a challenge and then learn to push our own private limits back a little further each day. To do otherwise serves no purpose.



### Push-Ups

Begin with a simple push-up, taking care to keep the back straight and the arms close into the sides of the body while it drops in between them. A *karate* push-up should always be done with the fists clenched and with only the index finger and the middle finger of the fist in contact with the floor. This keeps the hand and the arm aligned correctly and safely, and avoids bending or buckling of the wrist joint; it also begins to focus a new student's attention to the impact area of the fist (the first two knuckles) used in a *karate* punch. By keeping the arms in close to the side of the body, with the armpits closed down, the rising and falling approximates the punching action of the arms. Finally, the coordinated breath (inhaling through the nose when you drop and exhaling through the mouth while you push up off the floor) reinforces the pattern of breathing that goes together with the execution of basic techniques.



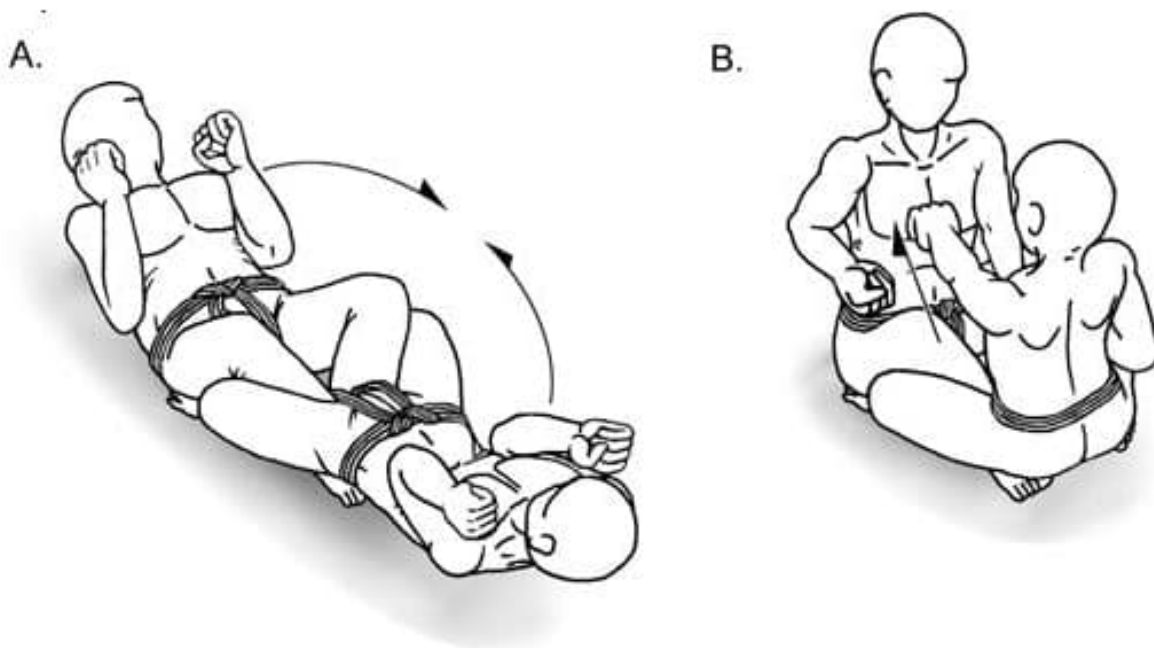
## Cat Stretch

This exercise is so called because it reminds people of the way a cat, waking from sleep, often goes through a similar stretching routine with its legs and spine. People who practice yoga will also see distinct similarities in the postures found in this exercise. A cat stretch is divided into two parts, but as you become accustomed to the exercise the link between the two should become invisible as you flow, in harmony with the breath, from one to other.

Begin the first part by placing the balls of the feet and the palms of the hands on the ground in what looks like a really bad push-up position (Figure A). Keep the feet together and stretch the legs and back by gently trying to place the heels on the floor while tucking the head in between the arms and looking up at the *ham*. From here breathe in through the nose and, rocking lightly backward, exhale while scooping the chest to the floor (Figure B) without actually coming into contact with it; straighten out the body, look forward, and end the exhalation and the movement together (Figure C). Turn the head to the right and left in quick succession (Figures D and E), breathing in sharply with each turn, and then look forward (Figure F); breathe out forcibly by squeezing the abdominal muscles (*hara*).

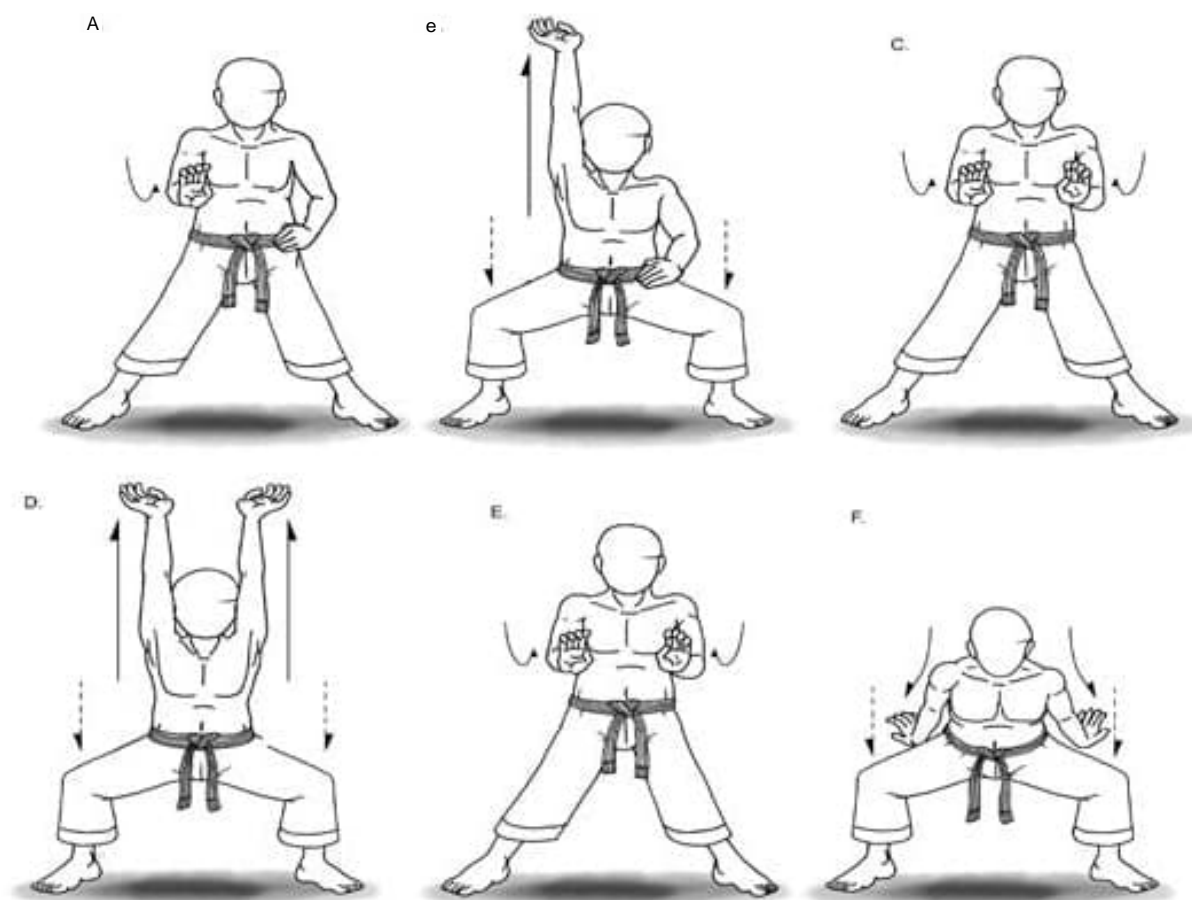
The second part continues from the outward breath that brought the first part to an end. Pushing up and backward with the arms (Figure G) and breathing in as you go, raise the body from the ground and come up on the toes while you roll the body in reverse and scoop back down toward the ground. (Figure H}. An inward

breath accompanies the movement up and away from the floor, and this becomes an outward breath when the body once more moves forward and down, 1b complete the cat stretch, the back is arched and the head held as it trying to look into the air behind you (Figure I). Hold this posture for a brief moment before gently returning to the starting position. Cat stretches promote rhythmical breathing, controlled body movements, and give a good stretch and strengthening workout to the arms, shoulders, and hamstrings.



### Sit-Up and Punch

Sitting on the Hoor facing your training partner, both people interlock their legs. This is achieved by **the** person whose legs are on the inside, turning his feet outward, while the person with his legs on the outside turns his feet inward (Figure A). From this position, both can perform sit-ups. In this version of the exercise, both rise and fall at the same time, and with each sit-up each throws a punch into the body of his training partner (Figure B), both punching **with** the right arm first and on the **next sit-up**, with the left. These blows should **not** be too heavy **at first**, but later, the intensity of the punch can be increased by mutual agreement.

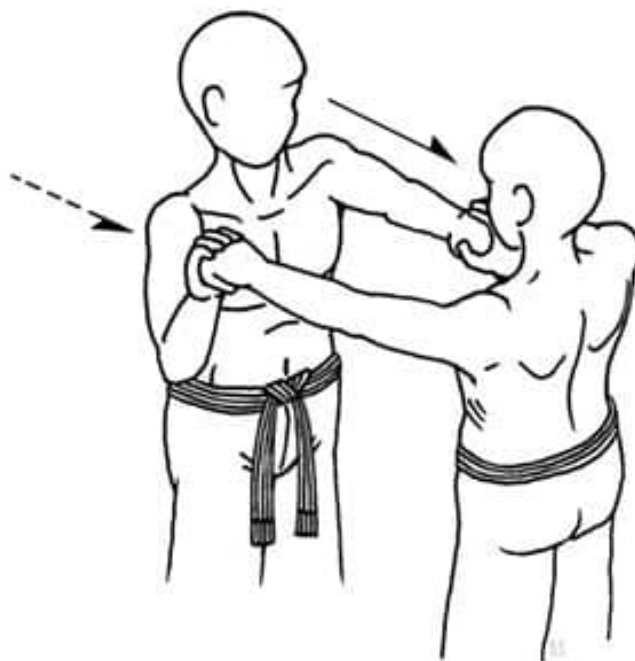


## Drop and Thrust

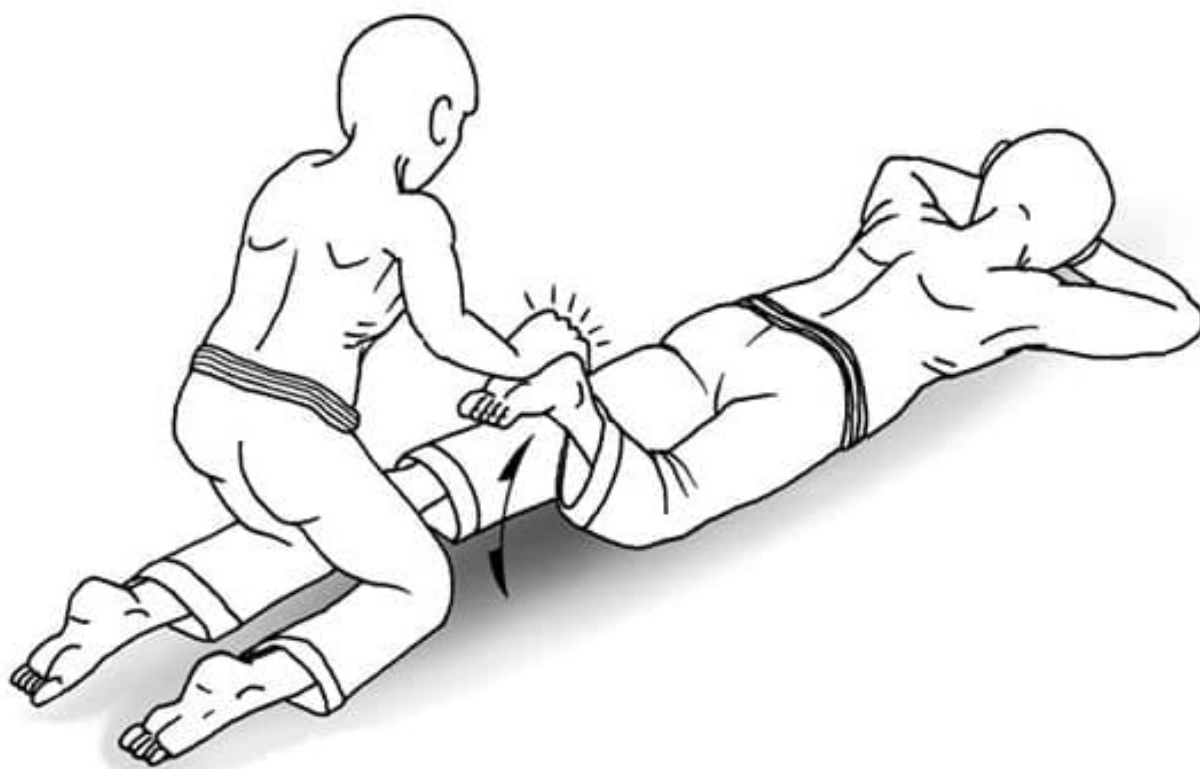
Standing with the legs wide enough apart to drop down into *shiko dachi* (low stance), keep the left hand resting on the thigh and have the right hand open and the arm chambered on the side of the body, as if ready to punch (Figure A). Take a deep breath in through the nose and with a strong exhalation drop the body down into *shiko dachi* and at the same time thrust the right arm directly upward (Figure B). The drop, the thrusting arm, and the outward breath should all conclude at exactly the same time. Hold for just a second before standing back up sharply and chambering the outstretched arm with as much energy as possible, as if striking to the back with an *empi uchi* (elbow strike). This is done with a quick inhalation through the nose. Having completed a number of these exercises, swap hands and repeat the same maneuver with the left hand. Follow this by doing the same again, only this time chambering both arms (Figure C) and thrusting both hands into the air at the same time (Figure D). A fourth version is done by adopting a double arm start position (Figure E), then dropping into *shiko dachi* and striking with a double *shoto uchi* (palm heel strike) to the rear (Figure F).

## Resistance Punching

Stand facing your training partner. One person holds out a *chudan zuki* (mid-level punch) with his other arm chambered to the side as normal. The other person holds on to the punching arm, just behind the wrist, and at the same time places his palms resting on the fist of the chambered hand. Taking a deep breath first, the puncher exhales while punching forward; at the same time, his training partner holds on to the retreating arm and pushes against the punch. **This is done with sufficient** force to make the puncher work hard to overcome the resistance being offered. Once the punch is completed, the person offering the resistance changes his hands over to grip the other wrist and push against the opposite fist of his training partner.



This exercise is done slowly and deliberately for a number of reasons: first, to allow a check to be made of your correct form when punching—wrist and elbow alignment, armpits closed down to connect your body's weight with the technique, harmony of breath and movement, and last but not least, the strong connection with the ground needed to transfer the energy in the punch back into your training partner. If the ground connection is poor, you will find the energy in the punch actually pushed the person punching backward.



### Leg Resistance

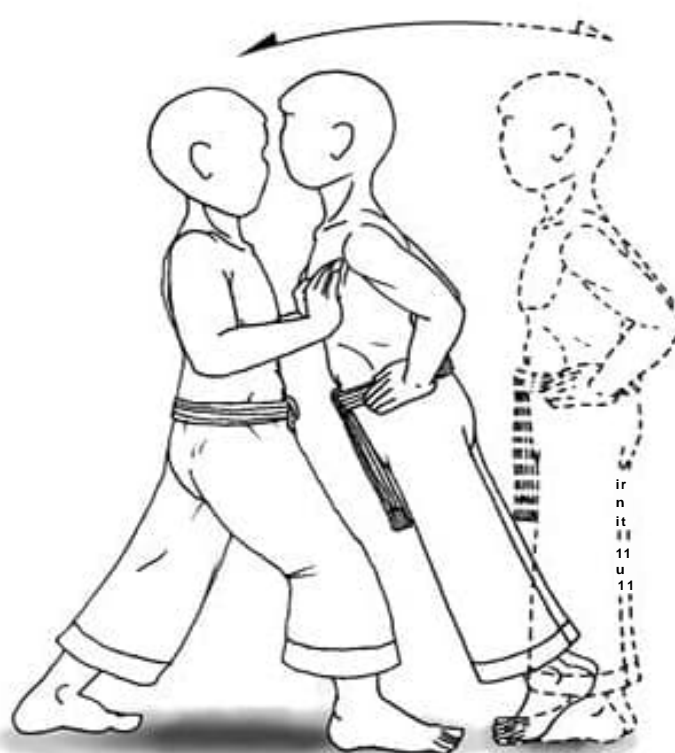
One person lies down flat with his chest on the floor and his head resting on the backs of his hands, his legs together and straight. With the training partner holding on to one ankle, the person exercising tries to bend that leg at the knee, bringing the bottom half of the leg to a vertical position against the resistance being presented by the training partner. Once the leg is vertical, the hands move around to offer the same level of resistance when the leg is returned to the floor. From there, change legs and repeat on the other side. Care should be taken not to let the pelvis (hips) leave the floor during the exercise; instead, try to isolate the bottom half of the leg and concentrate on working it against the opposing force.

Similarities to both the *Adho Muka Svanasana* (Downward Facing Dog) and *Bhujangasana* (Cobra) postures of yoga can be found at the start and finish of this exercise, and for me, this is yet one more Link pointing to *karate's* ancient past and the seeds of its distant origin on the Indian sub-continent. The beginning pose in a cat stretch aids the building of shoulder strength and flexibility; it develops a sense of awareness and stretches the spine and the hamstring that runs along the back of the calf muscles in the lower leg. It also rests the heart. The exercise ends in a pose almost exactly like the cobra position, and this too stretches the spine, back, and arms, while opening the chest. It also opens the heart.

## Body Catch and Push

Facing each other, one person stands to attention, holding his body stiff with his arms by his side. When ready he falls forward, remaining rigid while he does so. The person catching does so by catching his partner at the shoulders when he drops forward. In the same way as the *kongoken* is used as described in “Kongoken Exercise Four” (page 92), step back while you take the weight of your training partner and then, pushing the hips forward, push him back up to a standing position. Remember to change legs each time you step back to gain a sense of thrusting from both sides of the hip.

In addition, take care not to push too strongly because doing so may result in toppling your training partner backward. It is important to have respect for those we train with and never let our own enthusiasm or lack of *otomo* place others in danger.



Thrusting the hips is known as *koshi*. The word sounds exactly like the word used for the balls of your foot, but they are not the same. Using the hips without this feeling of *koshi* is a little like pulling a bowstring only halfway back before releasing an arrow.

*Otomo* means "attentiveness." On a deeper level, it means developing an ability to be aware of your surroundings, of being in the moment, and to a lesser extent, of anticipation. Here are two examples, the first of bad *otomo*, and the second of good. In the *dojo* the teacher is demonstrating the technique he wants the students to practice; he finishes the demonstration and, within seconds, some students cannot remember what they just saw demonstrated. Outside the *dojo*, a student is walking with his teacher toward a doorway, deep in discussion, and without a word being spoken about the approaching obstacle, the student steps forward and opens the door allowing them both to pass through, the student following his teacher, without breaking the flow of either their walk or conversation.



## Heavy Squats

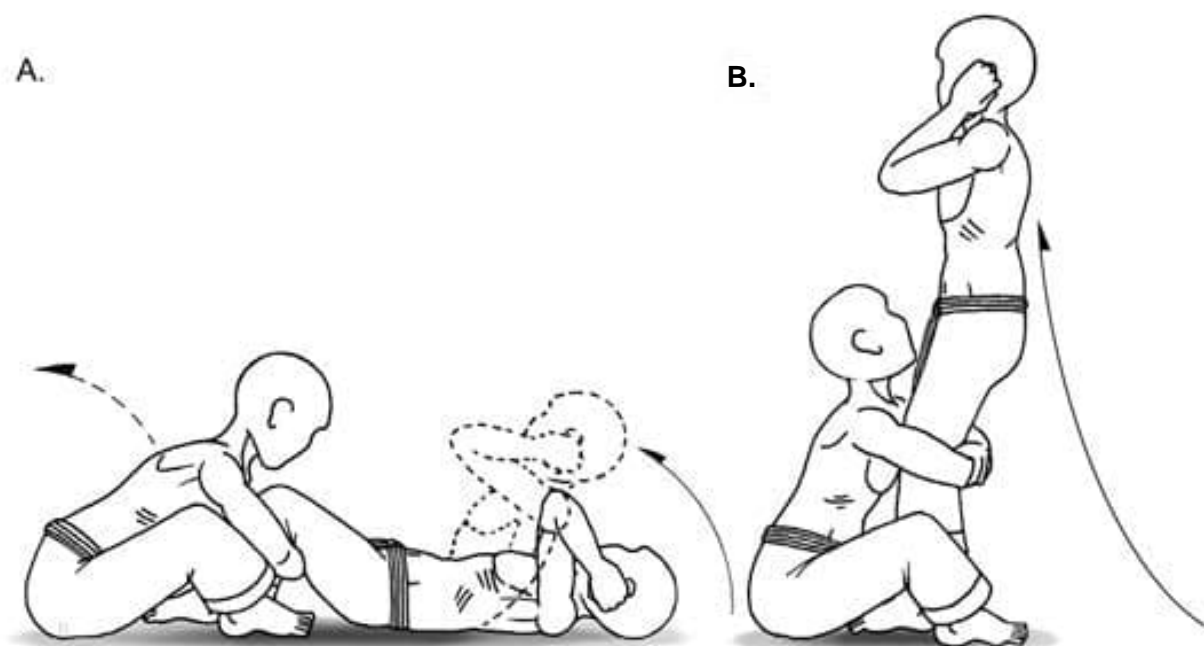
One person stands in *shiko dachi* (low stance) while a training partner, standing behind him, leans his body's weight on his partner's shoulders. From there, the person in *shiko dachi* tries to stand up and drop back down in quick succession, the extra weight from the training partner works the legs and helps build stronger muscles.



## Leg Lift and Push

One person lies on his back on the floor while the **other** person stands over **him**. The person on the floor holds onto his training partner's ankles and keeping both legs together and straight swings his feet up toward his partner's stomach, as **if to** kick him. The person standing catches the ankles and then instantly pushes them back to the ground with some force. The person lying down must not let his feet touch the ground; instead, he immediately swings his legs back up and tries to touch his partner's body. This "contest" works **and** strengthens the abdominal muscles and helps to coordinate the breathing during quick-fire action, the person doing the leg lift should remember to breathe in when his legs are pushed back to the ground and breathe out when he swings them back up again.

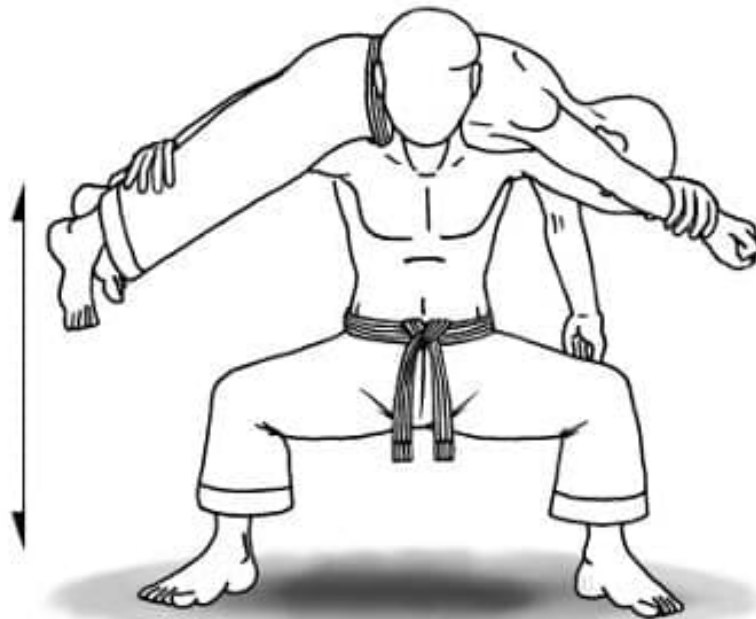




### Stand-Ups

With one person lying on his back, knees up, and his feet tucked under his training partners body, he prepares to do a sit-up. The hands are clenched and held at the side of the face or with fingers clasped behind the head, like other person sits on the ground and places his arms around the back of his partner's knees, anchoring his lower legs to the ground. From this position (Figure A) the person doing the exercise takes in a deep breath before exhaling forcefully while moving into a sit-up. Without stopping, he continues through the sit-up position, focusing on the legs, and stands up (Figure B). At this point the person acting as the anchor should take care not to clash heads while his training partner passes through on the way to standing upright.

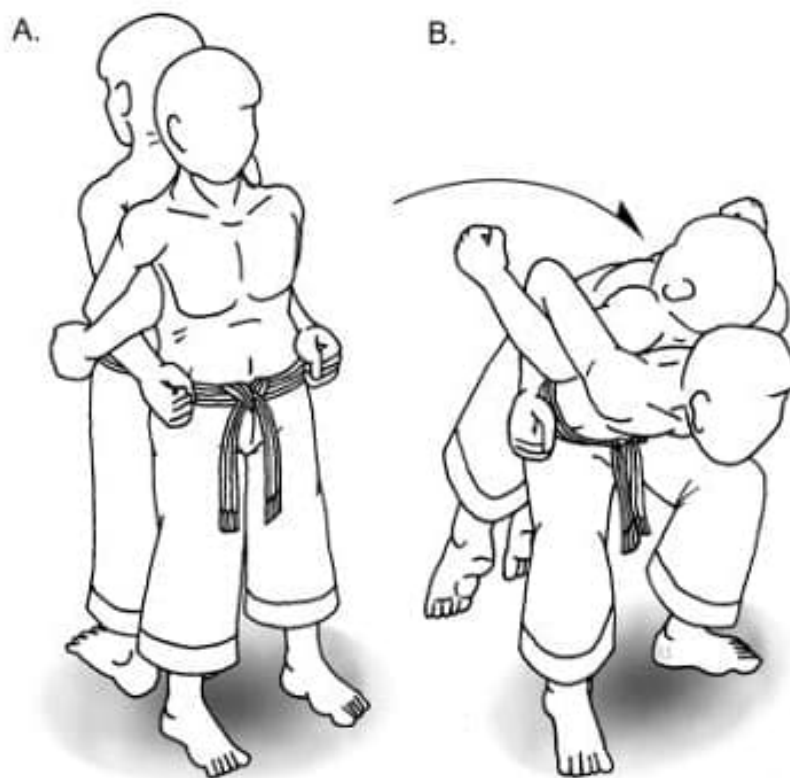
Stand to attention for a brief moment before sitting back down and returning to the start position. Great care should be taken when doing this so as not to drop down too heavily on the base of the spine. When ready, take a deep breath—and go again!



### Fireman's Lift and Squat

This exercise is a lot like the heavy squat described earlier; however, it offers much more resistance and requires a greater attention to balance. Because the amount of weight involved is also much greater, this exercise should not be done unless the weight of each training partner is close to equal.

Begin by the person doing the exercise gripping the left wrist of his training partner with his left hand. Lowering his own body by bending the legs, he slips his right arm between the legs of the person being lifted and pulls his partner's left arm over his shoulders and behind his head. This brings the entire weight of your training partner onto your shoulders. Now, standing in *shiko dachi* (low stance) proceed to stand up, and then squat back into *shiko dachi*. Great care should be taken to keep the back as upright as possible to prevent lower back injury. In addition, by adopting a good posture it tests the balance of the person doing the lift.



### Back Lift and Stretch

Standing back to back with your training partner, with the legs in *heiko dachi* (natural stance), interlock your arms (Figure A). From this position one person then bends forward at the waist (Figure B). The person being lifted should relax completely and allow his body's weight to sink. The stretch can be felt across the lower back and should be enjoyed for several seconds before the exercise is reversed. Have consideration for your training partner when changing over and make the transition from one person to the other slowly