

By Sensei Dino Kardas | Images by Charlie Suriano

The Sabaki



Enshin Karate's Sabaki techniques were designed with defending against weapons and multiple attackers in mind. Sensei Dino Kardas explains how the Sabaki principle works.

Solution

ENSHIN KARATE SELF-DEFENCE TECHNIQUES

The Basics

On the street there are no rules, so if you can avoid a violent confrontation, by all means do so. However, if you are concerned that you or the life of a loved one is in danger, you must be prepared to do whatever is necessary and use any tactics you can in order to survive. You must also be ready to deal with any kind of attack without warning, against one attacker, multiple attackers, even armed attackers.

It's extremely important to survey your surroundings, scan for objects such as walls, pillars, rocks, sticks, even chairs — basically, anything you can use to your advantage, especially when confronted by an armed attacker or multiple opponents. You should also look for weaknesses in your opponent, such as long hair, loose clothing that you can grab, maybe items of jewellery like necklaces and earrings — you can use all of these to your advantage.

If you are facing an attacker with a weapon, think of the weapon as an extension of the attacker's hand. This will mean you will need to adjust your distance accordingly. If you are confronted and are unable to avoid a physical clash, you must commit within yourself — with your spirit as well as your body — and fight with the intention of finishing quickly and

getting away as fast as you can.

Enshin Karate's Sabaki technique is equally effective on the street as it is in the dojo. Its techniques are smooth, short and extremely efficient. Simplicity is the key word in the Sabaki strategy; to do the utmost to your attacker with the minimum amount of motion and effort. Sabaki's circular action will enable you to redirect the attacker into nearby walls, chairs, pillars, etc., thus turning surrounding objects into effective weapons.

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Sabaki against multiple attackers

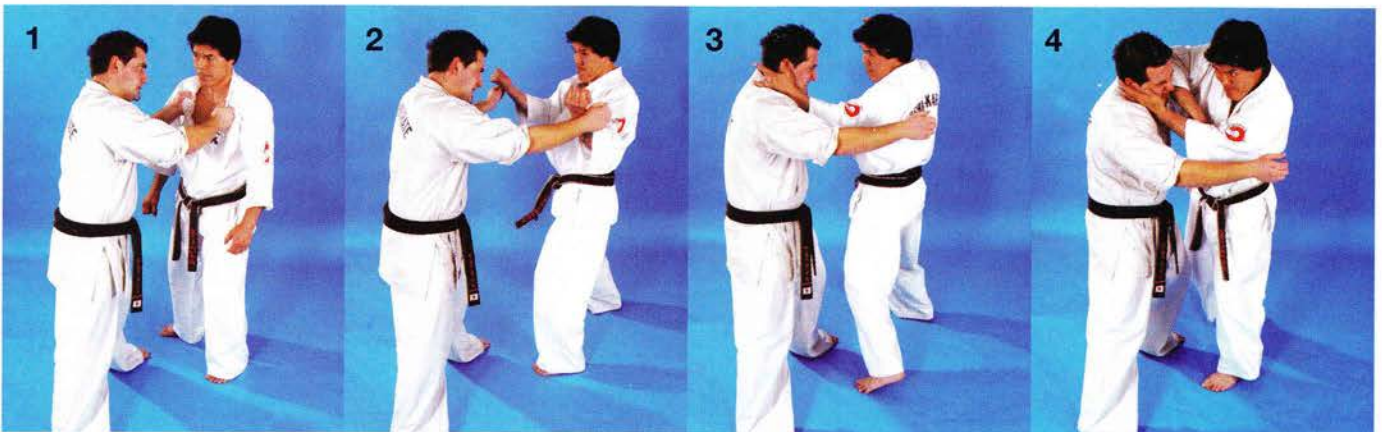
Enshin Sabaki method is particularly effective against multiple attackers. Enshin's strategy of using circular movement and grabbing techniques allows you to quickly gain an advantage over opponents. When attacked by several people, you don't have

time to stop and give your full attention to one opponent. It is even more dangerous to attempt to deal with two or more opponents at once by standing in the middle of them, leaving you directly in the line of attack from all directions. For example, it's foolish to believe you'll be able to wrist-lock one opponent while simultaneously back-kicking another and then deal with a third opponent. If you face multiple aggressors, expect them to try to attack all at once, not individually. If you stand in the centre, expect to be hurt.

Enshin founder Kancho Ninomiya teaches his students to keep moving and not give complete attention to any one opponent, so as not to leave themselves open to a blind-side attack. Try to position yourself in such a way as to keep one attacker between you and the other attackers. By using one attacker as an obstacle, around which his friends must go to get to you, you will only have to deal with one attacker at a time. Kancho also teaches students to drive attackers into surrounding obstacles or into their accomplices. These principles are a critical aspect in being able to survive such confrontations.

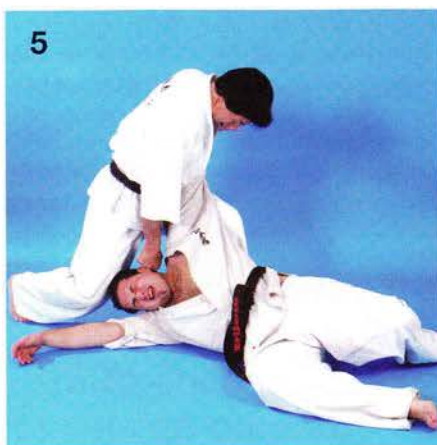
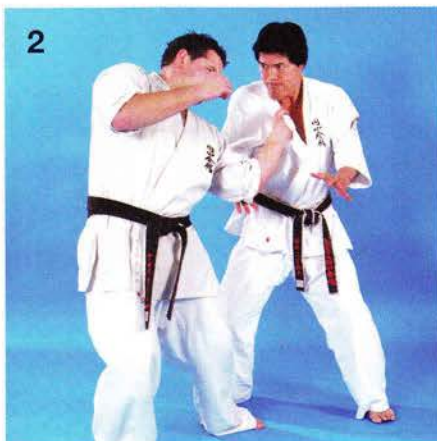
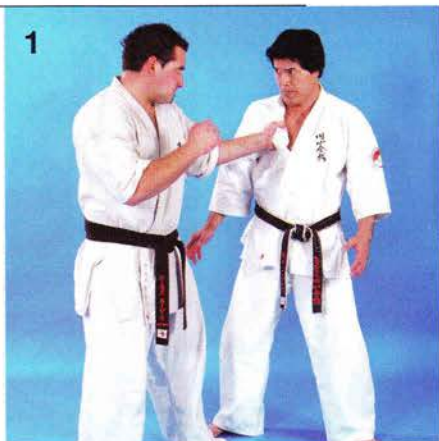
Using what's at hand

To be able to improvise and use whatever is at hand as a weapon is a skill



1. The attacker grabs for Kancho's lapels and launches a head-butt. 2. Reacting to the grab, Kancho steps back with his right leg to bring the attacker forward and break his balance. As he does so, he breaks the attacker's grip by striking the inside of both wrists using an outward swinging motion. 3. Kancho then steps in with his lead leg and grips the back of the attacker's head with his left hand, which also checks the attacker's arm. 4. Kancho pulls him into a powerful right *hiji-uchi* (elbow strike).

The Sabaki Solution



1. The attacker grabs Kancho's lapel to pull him into a punch. **2.** With his right hand, Kancho applies pressure to the lower part of the attacker's biceps, forcing him to bend his arm and loosen his grip. In the same motion, Kancho pushes the attacker's arm across his body to break his balance. **3.** Kancho steps in with his rear leg and drives his left hand up under the attacker's chin, stepping through... **4.** ...and reaping the attacker's leg back to execute *ura-nage* (back-throw) while turning backward in a circular motion. **5.** Kancho controls the attacker on the ground and applies a finishing strike.

that could one-day save your life. Through Kancho Ninomiya's years of training and experiencing real-life violence, he has been able to develop his Sabaki technique to incorporate the use of everyday items as weapons. Objects such as belts, jackets, handbags, etc., when used correctly to strike an assailant, can momentarily disable the attacker and expose an opening from which you could take the advantage. The following is just one example of Kancho Ninomiya's experience in using this tactic.

Shortly after moving to Denver, Kancho was teaching karate at a halfway-house when a troubled teenager slashed his wrists and ankles. The teenager then locked himself in an office and threatened anyone who approached. Kancho volunteered to disarm him. When Kancho entered the blood-smeared office, the young man's eyes kept darting from Kancho to the door and back again. Kancho Ninomiya had a jacket in his hand, so he waited until the teenager looked to the door again, then at that moment he flung the jacket into the teenager's face, stepped forward and swept out both his legs with a low kick. Kancho then kicked the knife into the corner and held the teenager until help arrived.

Self-defence as instinct

I truly believe that everything we train in the dojo is self-defence and I often wonder why the distinction between self-defence and general training is made. Every day we spend in the dojo practising basic techniques, pad work, heavy-bag training, conditioning, sparring, etc., should be spent with the intention of tuning our mind and body — not just doing techniques but making those techniques a part of us, like walking and breathing.

A student can learn and remember many self-defence techniques, but they are all pointless unless the techniques and the concepts trained become instinctive. True self-defence capability lies in being able to perform those techniques without thinking; to just react. Remember, in a physical confrontation we experience many different emotions and I believe training hard every day in the dojo helps us control those emotions, so we can focus on the job at hand: survival.

ENSHIN'S SABAKI PRINCIPLE

Kancho Joko Ninomiya's Sabaki Method is the essence of his Enshin Karate. It not only embodies the true spirit and power of karate, it employs a method rarely seen in other forms of martial arts. In developing Enshin's unique fighting strategy, Kancho Joko Ninomiya drew upon his many years of experience in full-contact competition and real-life confrontations, as well as his well-honed judo skills. Enshin karate-ka employ circular movement, known as Sabaki, to use opponents' power against them, to break their balance and create a strong position in their 'blind spot' from which to counter-attack.

Sabaki is the transitional movement that occurs when a defender blocks and moves out of the line of an attack, into a position from which he can freely and most effectively control his opponent. This position is always to the side and back of the opponent. The opponent can't reach across his body to strike you, and the opponent can't see you with both eyes to tell accurately where your attack is coming from — hence the term 'blind spot'. You are therefore in the best tactical position from which to counter-attack.

The fighting combinations derived from Enshin's Sabaki Method are not only quick and powerful, they are almost limitless.

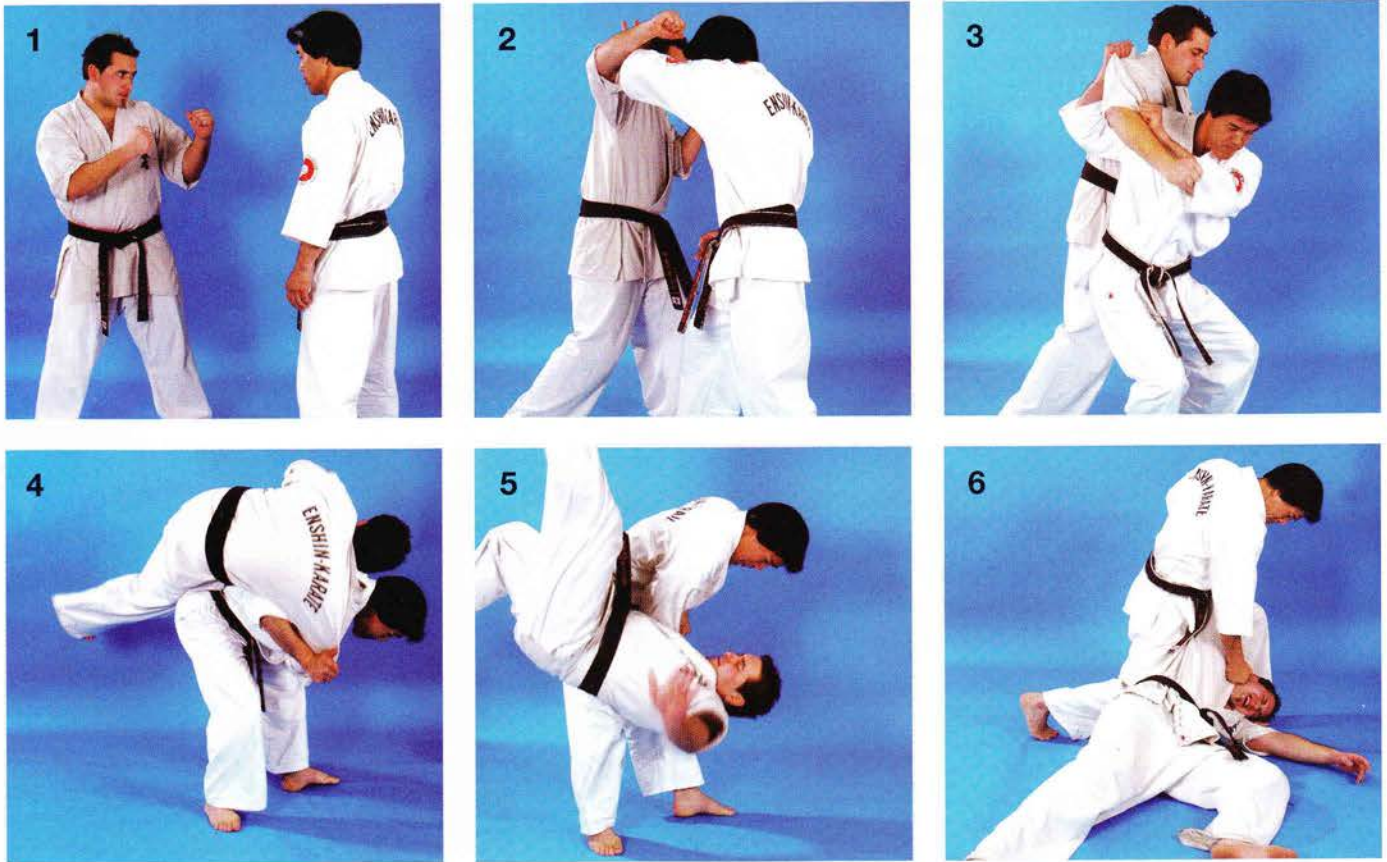
The Sabaki Solution

Awareness comes first

In self-defence, the one thing generally more important than tactical principles, instinctive physical responses and superior technique is awareness. Being aware of your surroundings and who is around you is the first step in avoiding confrontation, which should always be

your first priority. The second element of awareness is being able to read signs of others' aggression, your own (or companions') vulnerability and impending danger. However, altercations can arise quickly and this is not always easy to do. The techniques shown here are examples of what to do when surprised in such

situations, when your opponent has initiated an attack in order to gain the advantage. In these examples, Kancho Ninomiya employs the strategy of attacking his opponent's balance, moving off the line of attack and negating his opponent's firepower through controlling the distance and/or taking him down. **BLITZ**



1. The attacker throws a wild, overhand punch with his rear arm. **2.** His head lowered to protect his face, Kancho jams the punch with *jodan uke* (upper block) and grabs the attacker's striking arm as he steps inside, using a circular action with his right leg. **3.** Kancho continues the circular motion, stepping around with his left leg as he sinks his weight, making sure his centre of gravity is lower than the attacker's. **4.** Kancho throws the attacker over his hip... **5.** ...sending him hard into the ground, landing on his back. **6.** Kancho controls the attacker on the ground and applies an appropriate finishing technique.



1. When your opponent grabs you from behind and lifts to apply a choke-hold, his lower body is vulnerable and his balance is unstable. **2.** Swing your inside leg to the outside and hook it behind your attacker's legs. **3.** Twist backward as you swing your inside arm in front of the attacker's chest to create a scissor action with the legs. **4.** Sweep the attacker backwards to the ground. **5.** As he falls, land on top, driving your elbow into his chest. (Depending on the situation, you may choose to control him or strike and get back to your feet.)