

the **CrossFit** JOURNAL ARTICLES

The Jab and Right Cross

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When most people think of martial arts, they think of the striking arts—karate, kickboxing, Muay Thai, Tae Kwon Do, etc. As children we instinctively resort to throwing punches to resolve disputes and as adults we have made boxing a multimillion-dollar industry. Mixed martial arts (MMA) has been exploding in popularity the last couple years, and it is the phenomenal knockouts that are most popular with American crowds.

Boxing and kickboxing are not just for spectators and professional fighters though. They can be successfully incorporated into strength and conditioning programs for people of all fitness levels and ages. Additionally, some gyms are experiencing an influx of MMA fighters looking for help preparing for their fights, and it is useful for trainers to understand the fundamentals of what the fighter does in order to program an effective strength and conditioning routine.

This article will be the first in a four-part series addressing basic boxing and kickboxing techniques. As with any other exercise in strength and conditioning training, form is of the ultimate importance in martial arts. It is proper form and technique that allow the speedy and powerful delivery of a knockout punch. I will begin by addressing the basic fighting stance and then describe the elements of the left jab and right cross and how to drill them. All techniques will be described for a right-handed individual; left-handed fighters will need to reverse the left and right directions in all the techniques (e.g., right jab and left cross).

Fighting stance

The first position to perfect is the fighting stance, which is where you initiate striking movements from. Your feet

should be shoulder-width apart and at approximately a forty-five degree angle to each other. Do not lean too far forward or sit back onto your back foot. Keep your weight balanced. Maintain a slight bend in your knees and keep your weight on the balls of your feet. Your hands should be up and your elbows down, to protect your head and body.



As I describe the jab and the right cross, Bridgett "Baby Doll" Riley demonstrates proper form in the photographs. Bridgett is a former world champion boxer and a five-time world champion kickboxer. She trains and works at the world-famous Wild Card Boxing Gym in Hollywood, California, and also works as a stuntwoman and actress.

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Make sure that you are not standing “on a tight rope”—i.e., with feet aligned one directly in front of the other—or you will not be able to balance properly. The photograph of Bridgett’s feet above shows that they are not lined up in either direction. Her feet are shoulder-width apart, and, because she is right-handed, her left foot is in front of her right foot. A southpaw would be positioned in the opposite direction.

Make sure that your upper body and head are protected. By shrugging your left shoulder and turning your chin to the left and down, you can hide it behind your shoulder, while protecting the right side of your face with your right hand. Keep your hands up at your face at all times when you are not punching. This position is your home base and where you want your hands to return to immediately after each punch.

The jab

The jab is a fighter’s measuring stick. It is used to measure the distance between the fighter and his opponent, setting up the right cross and other strikes. You will not be at the proper distance to land a right cross if you are not able to land the jab.

The jab can also be used as a distraction technique. Constant jabbing in an opponent’s face blinds them. Once an opponent has become accustomed to your jab, you can also use it as a fake to set them up for other strikes.

When initiating the jab, be sure to keep the elbow in line while the left hand shoots out. Shoot directly straight out, as if there were a wall immediately to the left of you, leaving you no space to swing your arm out to the left or to raise your elbow out to the side. While your hand is shooting out it remains at the same angle as it was in fighting stance, with your thumb on the top side. At the last second, you will turn your fist over, so your thumb is now turned to the right. You are striking with the first two knuckles of your left hand. At the same time you take a small stutter step with your left foot and stomp it into the ground. Your foot should land on the ground at the same time your fist hits its target. This assists in putting weight into the jab.



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Again, keep your right hand up at your face the entire time and keep your chin tucked into your shoulder to protect both sides of your jaw. If your opponent is throwing jabs at the same time as you, you can turn the palm of your right hand out toward them, keeping it blocking your face, to catch and deflect the oncoming jabs.

After extending your arm for the jab, immediately bring your left hand back to your face. Do not drop your hand on the return to your chin. Dropping the jab leaves the left side of your face wide open to a counter from your opponent.

Bridgett recommends starting all combinations off with a jab, and it is good practice to end with a jab as well. There are two types of jabs—a quick jab and a stiff jab. A quick jab pops in and out, while a stiff jab has more weight behind it. If a jab is landing, you can use it offensively rather than just as a measuring method. In this case, sit down more into the jab and into the stutter step, and get your body behind the strike.

Mitt work with a trainer and bag work on your own are excellent ways to drill the jab. When doing bag work,



make sure you do not stand in a stationary position. Move around the bag. Also be sure not to always circle in one direction; get used to moving both clockwise and counterclockwise around the bag. Throw a variety of jabs, not just at a head level. Jab to the body by sitting down more into the jab, by bending your knees more and dropping your level while keeping good fighting stance. Also work on doubling up the jab.

The right cross

The typical “one-two” combination is a left jab followed by a right cross. The right cross is a much more powerful punch than the jab and also involves more body mechanics. Unlike the power for the jab, which comes from the small step of the front foot, the power for the right cross originates from the back foot.

The right cross begins from the ground and moves up the body. First, the right heel pivots outward, causing the right knee to turn inward, which in turn causes the hip to pivot and turn over. This propels the right shoulder and therefore the right arm and fist straight forward. This is a chain of events happening in very quick succession in a ripple effect.

You can see in the lower photo on page 4 that Bridgett's right foot and right knee have turned inward. Her hip is no longer open but has turned over as well. Not only does turning the hip over put more power into the punch by putting your whole body behind it and preventing an “arm punch,” but it also adds distance to the punch. The ripple effect of turning joints extends Bridgett's torso forward, increasing her reach.



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Like the left jab, you want to be sure to throw the right cross straight out from the body. Again, imagine you are standing directly next to a wall and there is no space for your arm to swing out to your right side—only straight forward. While your hand is shooting out, it retains the same angle it had in the fighting stance, with the thumb on the top side. At the last second, you will turn your fist over, so your thumb is now turned to the left. You are striking with the first two knuckles of your right hand.

When you throw the right cross, keep the other hand up at your face, protecting yourself at all times. Similarly, tuck your chin into your shoulder to keep both sides of your jaw safe from counterstrikes. Initiate the return to fighting stance by bringing your right hand straight back to your face, without dropping it. An intelligent opponent will be ready to counter a sloppy right cross.

When drilling, you can practice left/right combos on the heavy bag. Move around the bag while practicing your jab, but when you throw a right cross you should stop in one place and execute the punch so you can really put your weight into the strike.

For examples of the left jab and right cross finishing fights in Mixed Martial Arts, see the following matches:

Pedro Rizzo vs. Andrei Arlovski, UFC 37

Phil Baroni vs. Dave Menne, UFC 39



Bridgett Riley is a former world champion boxer and a five-time world champion kickboxer. She trains and works at the world-famous Wild Card Boxing Gym in Hollywood, California, and also works as a stuntwoman and actress. To see Bridgett in action, watch a clip online from her [World Kickboxing Association championship fight](#)

Becca Borawski teaches and trains at [Petranek Fitness/CrossFit Los Angeles](#) in Santa Monica. She has a master's degree in film from the University of Southern California and a background in martial arts training. She has blended these skills together to produce DVDs and build websites for professional fighters. Her main job is as the music editor on the TV show *Scrubs* and she currently trains jiu-jitsu under Eddie Bravo at 10th Planet Jiu-Jitsu in Hollywood.

