

Karate students training in front stance at Shuri Castle, c.1938

The Forward Stance is also known as the walking, front, forward-leaning, or lunge stance. Too many seem to over exaggerate this stance. It is one of the first stances you learn in striking martial arts such as Taekwon-Do, Karate, etc.

I usually give a demonstration of why we use this stance. I explain it as a push-through or power-through stance and usually explain a great way to do it is to imagine you are pushing a car. Now, when we push something so heavy, it is a long and deep stance, to gain the power and traction needed to push that 2000-pound subject forward. We will not be doing that in martial arts, at the most, we might be hitting a 300-pound object, but realistically, that object

will be much less.

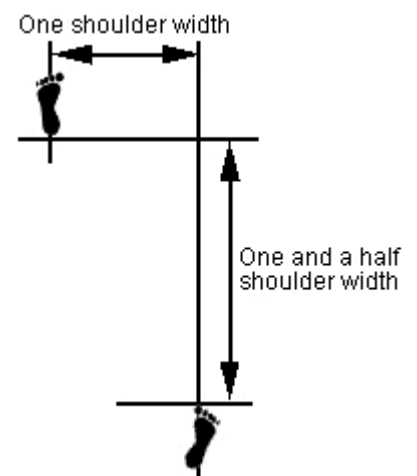
Over the years, I have often wondered why there is such a variance between styles, but most schools when it comes to stances. I mean, a stance by its very nature a “fixed” thing. It should be the same universally, right? Sadly, that doesn’t seem to be the case at all. When doing your pattern (Hyung, kata, poomse, or Tul) so many martial artists OVER extend the stance. Making it very difficult to move from stance to stance, even if it’s into another forward stance. This in will delay your time and rhythm during testing or competition and in a self-defense situation could be costly! Below are several definitions of this stance, from Taekwon-Do, Tang Soo Do, Shotokan Karate, and American Kenpo Karate!

In “orthodox” Taekwon-Do or the ITF, AKA Gen. Choi’s Taekwon-Do, it is called a “walking stance” or gunnun sogi. This stance has the most written about it, in his Encyclopedia of Taekwon-Do Vol. 2 3rd Edition 1993. Pg. 134-136. Here is what Choi, Hong-hi, and the International Taekwon-Do Federation® say about the “walking stance.”

Walking Stance (*Gunnun Sogi*)

This is a strong stance for front and rear, both in attack and defense.

1. Move one foot to either front or rear at a distance of one and a half shoulder width between the big toes and a shoulder width from one center of the instep to the other. **Over** one and half shoulder width in distance makes the movement slow and weak against an attack from the side, and weak again an attack from the front or rear.
2. Bend the front leg until the knee cap forms a vertical line with the heel, extending the opposite leg fully.
3. Distribute the body weight evenly on both feet.
4. Keep the toes of the front foot point forward, the opposite foot 25 degrees outward. **Over** 25 degrees weakens the leg joint against an attack from the rear.
5. Tense the muscles of the feet with the feeling of pulling them toward each other.



When the right leg is bent, the stance is called a right walking stance and vice-versa. It can be either full facing or half facing both in attack and defense.

Hwang Kee of the **MooDuk Kwan** calls his stance a Front Stance or “Chun Kul Jaseh” and in his book ‘Tang Soo Do (Soo Bahk Do), both the 1978 English and 1992 English describe it as such on pages 159-160.

Explanation First spread both legs too should width. Next, step forward with one leg about 60cm and bend the knee of the front leg while keeping the back leg straight. Concentrate your balance in the center of your body, or abdomen.

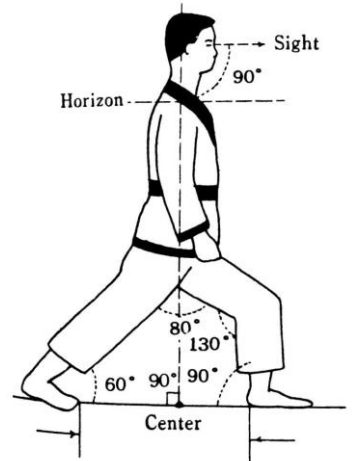
Specifications of the Body

Head: Look straight ahead with your head held upright and straight. (Make sure not to tilt the head forward, backward, or to either side.)

Body: Stand straight and naturally expand your chest.

Arms: Drop your arms to both sides naturally.

Legs: Spread your legs to the sides to the width of the shoulders. Then, step forward with one leg to a distance of 60cm and bend the knee of the front leg. Keep the back leg straight. There is an angle of 60 degrees between the rear leg and the ground. There is an angle of 80 degrees between both legs. The knee of the front leg is bent to make a 130-degree angle between both parts of the leg. The bottom of the front leg maintains a 90-degree angle with the ground.



Balance: The center of gravity runs through the center line of the body. The body is at a 90-degree angle to the ground.

Sight: Maintain a line of focus at a 90-degree angle from the face. Look straight ahead.

Hands: Hold your fist loosely and keep your arms down at your sides straight and naturally.

Feet: The distance between both feet is 60cm in length and 30 cm in width.

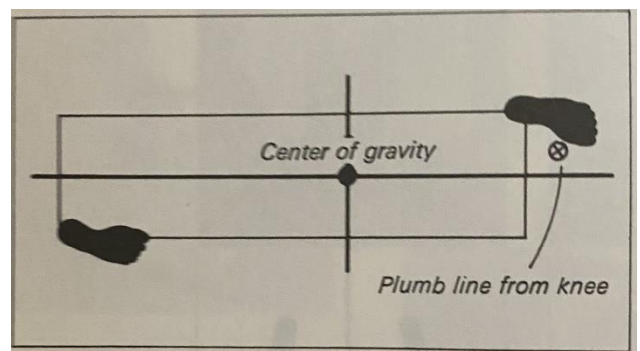
Distribution of Strength: Distribute 10 percent of your total strength to the upper part of your body and distribute 15 percent of your total strength to each leg. Concentrate your balance in the abdomen.

Application: The fundamental stance to start any movement. Often used as an offensive stance.

Special Remarks: One can advance forward easily from this stance. This stance provides strong balance and stability to withstand any frontal attack.

And in **Shotokan Karate**, that which is the base art of most Korean striking arts and original Kwans of Taekwondo such as the Chung Do Kwan, etc. is called a “Zenkutsu-dachi” or simple front stance as well. In Nakayama Sensei’s book series “Best Karate Comprehensive Vol. 1” on page 30 of the first edition 1977 fourth printing 1980 describes the front stance as:

The back leg is straight, the front leg is bent so that the knee is directly over the foot, and the hips are lowered. The back must be kept directly over the hips and perpendicular to the ground. Face directly forward. The distribution of weight between the front and rear foot is in the ratio of 6 to 4. In the *hanmi* (half-foot-facing) variation of this stance, the torso is at a 45-degree angle to the front, with the head facing forward. This is a strong position for attack on frontal targets.



In **American Kenpo Karate** founded by Ed Parker their front stance is called a “forward bow” or a “bow and arrow stance.”

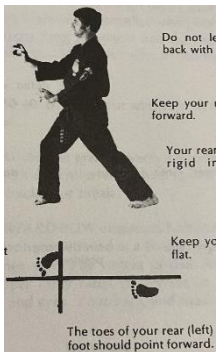
In *Ed Parker’s Infinite Insights into Kenpo 2, Physical Analyzation 1* copyright 1983 first edition on pages 65-69 and in *Kenpo Karate Sophisticated Basics: 1 - Stances [VHS]* from 1989 at the 36:32 mark

Mr. Parker states: **Forwards Bow and Arrow Stance** – is primarily used in a **STANCE** change to extend the reach of the rear arm and increase its power. The most important contribution of the FORWARD BOW is a STANCE change between NEUTRAL BOWS. The form and smoothness of this sequence will largely determine the effectiveness of the rear arm. Since retreating with the FORWARD BOW is difficult and exposure to vulnerable areas is more pronounced, this STANCE is intended to be transitory.

A FORWARD BOW can be formed from the NEUTRAL BOW by rotating the rear hip so that it is even with the forward hip. The front leg does not change, but the rear leg becomes almost stiff as it pushes the rear hip forward. The rear foot, while still flat, pivots on the ball (as the heel is thrust back) to a position where the toes point mostly forward. The weight shifts more to the front leg, but the tendency to lean with the

shoulders or stiffen the forward leg must be avoided. To check your form, watch yourself in a mirror.

The movement is a rotation of the waist, the back remains straight, the shoulders square and parallel to the mirror, and the head does not rise nor move forward.



Finding the proper dimension for the FORWARD BOW are simple. First, find the dimensions of your NEUTRAL BOW. Once this has been determined, have the heel of your rear foot thrust back by pivoting on the ball of that foot. Push your rear hip forward, as you stiffen your rear leg so that both hips line up with each other. Upon completion, of this adjustment, all dimensions- width, depth, and height would be established automatically. One foot is ahead of the other with your forward foot at a 45-degree angle from your opponent and the rear foot at a 90-degree angle from your opponent. A toe-heel/Heel-knee relationship.

Weight Distribution: 60-40, 60% of your weight is on the forward leg and 40% is on the rear.

Reason and Purpose: Gives you greater reach, enhances your power and allows you a greater foundation with which to brace yourself. It is useful as a leg check, buckle, or break.

