

Heavy Bag Training

"The primary purpose of JKD is kicking, hitting, and applying bodily force."

--*Tao of Jeet Kune Do*(p. 34), Bruce Lee

Heavy bag training is the most common combat training method to cross over into fitness routines. The self-paced nature of bag work makes it accessible to many, certainly more so than other combat conditioning techniques such as sparring. The danger is not to the fitness enthusiast who adopts this technique to burn calories and dissipate stress. The danger is to those who *believe* that they are training to fight in some fashion but are actually ingraining bad habits. "Everlast doesn't hit back" is a cynical way of saying that the heavy bag offers limited feedback. *Laziness goes unpunished.*

A fighter should have a balanced training regimen and a reasonable view of the value of bag work in that schedule. The weaknesses of the bag as a training device should be known and accounted for. With some concentration, these weaknesses can be turned into strengths. At that point the usefulness of the bag is optimized.

During bag work you should *take advantage* of the fact that you are not forced to deal with a dangerous opponent. You are able to pay more attention to your own form, stance, footwork, accuracy, and so forth. Understand that bag work is not the time to be sloppy, but rather the time to be *overly* concerned with your body mechanics. Once you are faced with someone trying to pummel you in return, I sincerely hope you are past the point where you need to remind yourself to keep your hands up.

You can also practice longer combinations than you would ever get away with. Don't, however, practice chains that would never occur. Think through the way an opponent would react to your blows one by one and whether your next shot would logically follow. There just isn't a reason to put an impractical movement pattern into your nervous system when there are so many useful ones to be learned.

The most common errors in bag training:

1. Sloppy/careless technique
2. Not learning how to *miss*
3. Standing too close to the bag—not learning distance
4. Hitting from an unstable base
5. Not defending yourself at all times (hands too low)
6. Not aiming at real targets (everything at chest height)

How to correct these errors:

1. Constantly remind yourself of proper technique—out loud if necessary.
2. **Shadow box** every combination you throw on the bag. Shadow boxing is the kind of accessory work, like footwork drills, that isn't glamorous but separates trained fighters from average 'tough guys'. Shadow boxing teaches you what happens when you miss.
3. Do not stand in range in front of the bag to throw punches! In reality, you must stay away and then step or lunge in to throw a combination. Use **tape** on ground to indicate minimum distance you should stand from bag. Drop a line from the center of the bag, then in a fighting stance place your own center of gravity above it. Shuffle (or lunge) forward and extend your arm in a jab (or front leg front kick if appropriate). Drop a line from the end of the extended body weapon and then tape this circle.
4. Check, and, if necessary, re-set your **stance** every combination. Always keep your knees bent, heels elevated slightly, and weight shifting comfortably with just enough motion to overcome inertia.
5. After each combination, you should return to a fighting **guard**, hands beside your head, arms against ribcage, with the tip of your lead foot slightly *behind* the distance line on ground. It will probably seem excessive at first but "bridging the gap" as Bruce Lee called it, crossing into and out of that danger zone, is literally what separates you and your opponent. You have to be able to get there to deliver blows.
6. Next, tape off your **targets**. Stand against the bag and put tape at the level of your nose, chin, solar plexus, groin, and kneecaps. This means that there are five different lines around the bag. Strive to develop accuracy. Concentrate on watching each blow land.

Basic Boxing Combinations

Perform these from a fighting stance, beginning outside of range, stepping in with the jab, and stepping back out after each, then switching lead.

1. Jab—lead hook
2. Jab—cross—lead hook
3. Jab—lead hook—cross
4. Jab—lead uppercut
5. Jab—lead uppercut—cross
6. Jab—lead hook—cross—lead uppercut
7. Jab—lead uppercut—cross—lead hook

As you train, accustom yourself to checking the following:

Always keep hands in a defensive “ready” position, palms next to the head, arms vertical and tight to body protecting the ribs. **Protect yourself at all times.**

Do **not** stand square to the bag; this offers too many potential targets to your adversary. You should be at about a 45 degree angle with your lead hand and foot closer to your target.

Look where you are punching—especially when using a jab or cross, look down your arm as if it were a gun sight. Do not hit just anywhere—pick a target, look at it, and adjust your punches accordingly. Keep your head in line with your body, chin tucked.

Always maintain a stable base. Both feet should be on the ground, but not flat-footed. Shuffle on the balls of your feet, keeping at least your back heel slightly elevated.

Keys to Training Success

Remind yourself constantly:

Practice does not make perfect—
Perfect practice makes perfect.

Always maintain a stable base: legs bent, weight on balls of feet

Protect yourself at all times: maintain your defense

Be precise: know where you are punching and strive for accuracy

Learn to focus when fatigued: this is the time you should concentrate on form the most, and not allow yourself to become sloppy.
There is *no excuse* for carelessness.

Train yourself to use both sides equally. Anything you do with one hand forward, practice with the other side an equal amount of time or repetitions.

Stay loose: being precise is not the same as being tense or moving like a robot. Pure muscular strength is not much help; learn to conserve your energy and “throw” punches and kicks rather than *pushing* them.

Work endlessly to perfect the most common combinations.

Top 10 Kettlebell Drills for Boxing

Study these deeply.

Perform each technique for one minute continuously for 30-60 minutes or perform the listed number of reps of each and continue repeating the list until you are done or your time is.

1. Two Hand Swingx15
2. Military Pressx5/side
3. One Hand High Pullx5/side
4. Bridge Pressx10
5. Snatchx5/side
6. Turkish Get-Upx2/side
7. Hot Potato/Crush Pressx10 each
8. Hook Swingx20
9. Double Cleanx5
10. Rack Hold for time—?

General Boxing Workout

Work up to 3 minute round, 1 minute rest, for 15 rounds=1 hour

1. Box Step Drill: Walking in a 2-step box. First time around, no punching. Second time, jab each step. Third, jab-cross each step, then repeat until 3 minutes is up.
2. Jump rope
3. Shadow Box: straight punches only (Jab-cross)

4. Box Step Drill: repeat above
5. Jump rope
6. Shadow Box: any combinations

7. Speed Bag: Jab—Cross, Double Jab—Cross, Triple jab—Cross, then switch leads and repeat.
8. Speed Bag: Elbows/bottom fists for shoulder flexibility

9. Heavy Bag: Jab only; single, double, triple, to head and body, alternate leads
10. Heavy Bag: Lead hand combinations only
11. Heavy Bag: Outside to inside combinations
12. Heavy Bag: Infighting: shove, close hooks, uppercut

13. Medicine Ball Wall Pass
14. Full-Contact Twist
15. Plank/Cosmonaut Sit-Up

General Boxing Workout

Goal: 3 minutes work, 1 minute rest

1. Shadow Boxing

- Round # 1: Walking in a 2-step box. First time around, no punching. Second time, jab each step. Third, jab-cross each step, then repeat until 3 minutes is up.
- Round # 2: Step forward with combination, step back, turn off 90 degrees and repeat.
- Round # 3: Move around freely with all combinations, always leading with a jab.

2. Jump Rope

Mix up double and single feet, shuffle, slalom, hip twist

- Round # 4
- Round # 5
- Round # 6

3. Speed Bag

- Round # 7: Stand square, single straight punches alternating
- Round # 8: Boxing stance, double jab and switch lead foot
- Round # 9: Jab—Cross, Double Jab—Cross, Triple jab—Cross, then switch leads and repeat.

4. Mitts

- Round # 10: Reaction jab
- Round # 11: Reaction jab cross and retreat (mitt holder follows with mock punch)
- Round # 12: Same combinations as bag work

5. Heavy Bag

- Round # 13: Lead hand combinations only;
- Round # 14: Jab—cross plus circling (always step towards your lead hand). When you have made one circle, switch lead side and repeat in other direction.
- Round # 15: Power! Forget the jab or moving in and out. Stand close, use uppercuts, crosses, and hooks. Hit as hard as possible with everything you have left. The end of a fight is the time you need to learn how to dig deep and fight fatigue.

Assuming that you have anything left at this point, you will perform a short routine of unweighted exercise to improve your fighting fitness. For now, strive to complete a “ladder” (explained below) for each type of push-up, along with a sit-up ladder between each.

6. Calisthenics

Push-ups, alternating with sit-ups between each type:

- Standard
- Diamond
- Dive bomber/Navy Seal
- Special Forces
- Santana “T”
- Russian Superman

A ladder with a partner is performed as follows:

Partner A does one push-up, partner B does one.

Partner A does 2 push-ups, partner B then does two.

A performs 3, then B performs 3.

...and so forth until one partner can't complete the reps (say, 6)

Then go back down the ladder:

A performs 5, then B performs 5.

A does 4, then B does 4.

...and so forth until each does 1, then move to next exercise

Your short-term goal is to do all 12 ladders (6 types of push-ups and 6 sets of sit-ups) up to 5 reps. This is a total of 150 push-ups and sit-ups.