

Skill Training Checklist

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** is not just a pre-fight instruction. It is a bad habit to allow yourself to stand in front of the bag unprotected especially if you are also standing too close. If you are drilling keep your hands where they can protect you from whatever opponent you are facing—bag, coach with mitts, image in mirror.

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

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. If you continue to repeat techniques carelessly *you are practicing and ingraining mistakes*.

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.

Always maintain a stable **base**. Both feet should be on the ground, legs bent at all times but not flat-footed. Connect to the ground with the balls of your feet, keeping your back heel *elevated*.

Do not stand **square** to your opponent, even a heavy bag; this offers too many potential targets to your adversary. Even if your centerlines are lined up, your torso should be at about a 45 degree angle with your lead hand and foot closer to your opponent’s targets.

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 rather than *pushing* them. Loose means not fighting against your self—this is different than being floppy or overly relaxed, but it recognizes that *muscle tension is only useful at the moment of impact*.

Accuracy in all training...looking at target and picking one before firing. Fire control and discipline. If range is bad advance until it is OK; never punch air if it can be avoided and never flail; if you don’t know what you are doing then don’t do it. This is something else lost in boxing and missing even in many striking arts which don’t use contact.

If you want to improve your boxing skills do the following:

- *Do mirror work every day* until your first world championship, and then cut back to every other day.
- *Move your legs every day*—jump rope, sprint, walk briskly, swing a kettlebell, squat deep, take ballet or salsa—but do it daily!
- *Put the amount of effort in perspective*—the fighters who make it far enough for you to see have spent literally thousands of hours training. Stay conservative—evaluate your progress after the first 100 hours before you compare yourself in any way to anyone.
- *Understand that boxing is a movement discipline*—in principle it is no different than yoga, tai chi, dance, gymnastics, other combat sports and so forth. Planned (rather than random) success is the result of using mechanically sound techniques from a scientifically conditioned base. Sound technique is the result of careful drill in the same way as any other martial arts technique.
- *Careful drill*—means repetitively performing the techniques in front of a mirror or coach, always attempting to produce a motion or position closer to the ideal. *Careful drill* is a time to ‘automate checklists’ so that once nerves kick in you will be accustomed to performing that skill set without conscious thought. *Careful drill* means that going through the motions is not enough—you must be trying to do better every time.

Please try to understand AHEAD of time the issues posed by trying to recall a sports skill while being beaten up by someone who knows how. This tends to inhibit recall as well as fine motor performance. Seemingly easy things get hard.