

FIRST STEPS IN BOXING™

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ILLUSTRATED WITH DIAGRAMS

BOXING is scientific hitting, so the first thing the boy who wants to become a boxer should learn is the correct way to hold his hands and arms so as to deliver a hard, true punch. There is nothing better for this purpose than a "dead bag." Not all gymnasiums are equipped with this fixture, but you can easily make one yourself. Get a strong bag of close weave and fill it with a mixture of sawdust and sand until it weighs from 50 to 100 pounds, according to your size and strength. Suspend it from the ceiling by a stout cord so that the mid-

dle of the bag is level with the pit of the stomach. If you can have your cord attached to the bag by a swivel, so much the better. When you have it arranged to your satisfaction, put on an old pair of kid gloves—and face the bag in the position shown in Fig. 1, with left foot advanced twelve to fifteen inches before the right. There is nothing fixed about the distance your feet should be apart. It must depend upon your build; but don't straddle too much.

Stand far enough back from the bag to put all the weight of your body into your punches as the bag swings to you. At first you



Fig. 1.

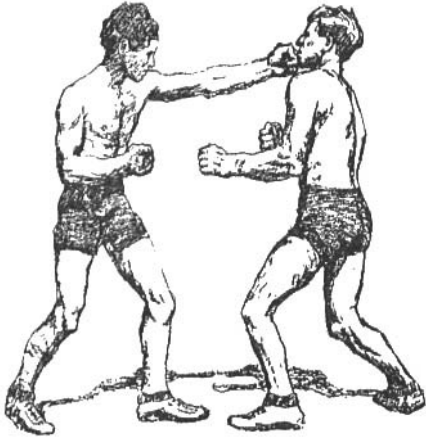


Fig. 2—The straight left.Fig.



3—Blocking a straight left.

may plant yourself flat-footed, but avoid keeping the legs too stiff. Punch straight with both fists with all the weight and snap that is in you. You may occasionally vary the exercise by standing in closer to the bag and punching with bent elbows. Keep the elbows fairly close to the sides and the fist true on the forearm. If the fist is not driven straight into the bag with the forearm directly behind it you will get a sprained wrist. Avoid also hitting with the thumb joint turned toward the bag, or you will have a sprained thumb. Most beginners at boxing meet with these mishaps before they learn how to hit. An ordinary pneumatic punching bag, though valuable as a training appurtenance, is inferior to the solid bag for practicing hitting.

The general position assumed in boxing is shown in Fig. 1. After one has attained some proficiency this position will naturally be modified by his build and individuality. Whatever it be, it must permit of easy and rapid advance or retreat and freedom to hit or block with either hand.

The beginner should practice footwork before putting on the gloves at all. Take the position

shown in Fig. 1, and practice advancing rapidly by stepping forward with the left foot, then bringing up the right foot so that you are in the original position. Retreat by stepping back with the right, then following it with the left. Step to the right with the right foot first and to the left with the left foot first. The idea is that you must keep well balanced and learn to keep your feet well braced, so that you are ready at all times to deliver or resist a punch.

Plant your feet firmly when punching. Practice footwork in conjunction with punching the dead bag. Keep moving around it, hitting from all sides, and practice stepping forward with the left foot and delivering your punch at the same instant. You will understand the objection to straddling with feet too far apart if you will attempt to step forward or retreat when in that position, and see how slow it makes you.

In practicing these exercises keep the muscles of legs and arms relaxed. By keeping tightened up all the time you only tire yourself unnecessarily. The hand, of course, must be firmly closed when you land.



Fig. 4—Double straight left lead and block.

The first punch

to master is the straight left, usually called the left jab. Heighten the dead bag till its center is level with your shoulder. Take position in Fig. 1, back from the bag, so that you can just touch it with the left arm extended, fingers and all. Step toward it with the left foot, raising the right heel, and at the same time straighten the left forearm with a snap. The speed and effectiveness of the punch will depend on the snap.

Now put on the gloves with a partner. Use eight-ounce gloves and practice with a man near your own weight and height. Face each other on guard as in Fig. 1. Step in with the left foot and straighten out the left arm in one movement as you have already practiced on the bag. The jab is landed as shown in Fig. 2.

Fig. 3 shows one method of blocking this blow. The right arm is thrown up, open palm turned to the striker, so as to catch the blow on the fleshy part of the forearm. Let both partners practice the jab and block at the same time, as in Fig. 4. Step in about fifteen inches, shoot out the left and bring up the right guard, the three movements simultaneously. Step back with the right foot and repeat the movement.

The left uppercut is merely a left hook directed upward. Your practice of hook blows on the dead bag will have prepared you for effectively landing this punch. By swinging the bag wide, stepping in almost beneath it and meeting it with an upward hook, while it is still



Fig. 5—The left uppercut.

in an oblique position you can get good practice in delivering an uppercut. The feet should be planted firmly and the entire weight of the body from the toes up thrown into the punch.

There will be times when your opponent is too close to you, or his head too low for the effective use of the jab. Whenever he makes a movement to your left with his head down is your opportunity for a left uppercut. It may be landed on the chin, as in Fig. 5, or on the face.

A way to block a left uppercut is shown in Fig. 6. It is not necessary to try to block always with the palm; the forearm does as well sometimes, but when blocking the palm should be kept open. The practice of the left uppercut with your partner may be postponed until you have studied the left hook to the body, when the two may be practiced together.

The left hook to the body should land on the pit of the stomach (solar-plexus) to be most effective. This blow, as its name implies, is delivered with the elbow bent and requires that you step in close to your opponent. At the same time you should throw your head forward and to the right, bringing the shoulder well up behind the blow, as in Fig. 7. A simple block for the left hook to the body is the right across the solar-plexus, as in guards shown in Figs. 1 and 8.

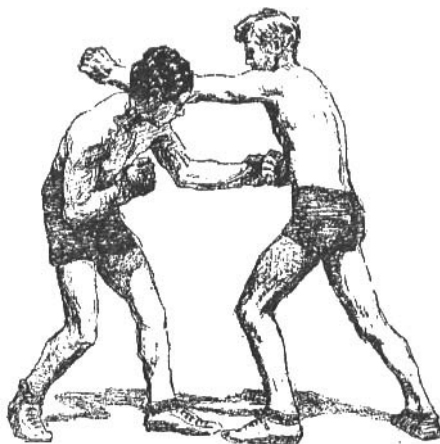
You may now face your partner and practice these two hooks simultaneously. Step in and aim a left uppercut at his chin, at the same time keeping your right



Fig. 6—Blocking a left uppercut.



Fig. 7—Left hook to body.



8—Blocking left hook to body.

guard across the solar-plexus as in Fig. 5. Your partner will block your uppercut with his right as in Fig. 6, at the same time as he drives his left hook to your stomach, which, of course, your right will stop if it is where it ought to be. Time these punches and blocks so that all four take place as one movement. Then change about and while you work the left hook to the stomach let your partner work the upper cut.

The only right-hand punch we shall discuss in the course of this article will be the right-hand hook to the jaw, called the cross-counter. It is usually employed when your rival has led with his left. You allow the left hand to pass over your shoulder (either right or left) or even take it flush on the face for the sake of getting in this deadly blow. The

right is then crossed over your rival's extended left, as in Fig. 9, landing on the jaw. This punch gets the full weight of the body behind it, and when landed cleanly on the point of the chin or on the angle of the jaw, constitutes the knockout blow.

One block for this blow is shown in Fig. 10. Keep the right palm open and the forearm stiff, with the glove three or four inches away from your jaw. The force of the right cross is so terrific that if you allow your guard to touch your jaw, the blow may knock you down in spite of the interposed glove. It is a good plan when leading with the left to keep the shoulder well up and the chin down, thus protecting the jaw.

Practice the right cross-counter as shown in Fig. 9, slipping the left jab

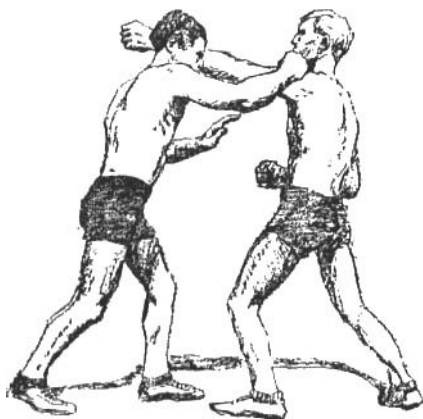


Fig. 9—The right-hand hook to jaw, the right cross-counter.

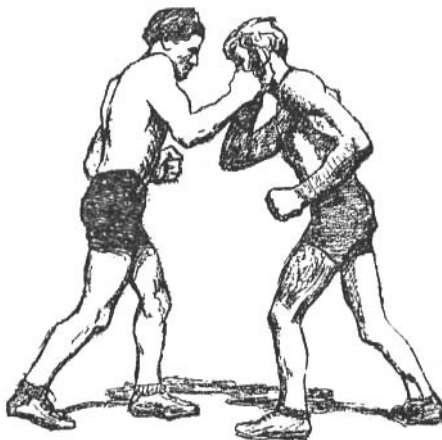


Fig. 10—Blocking a right hook to jaw.

and crossing your right to the jaw, but of course in this case you must withhold your full force from the punch. Then you may practice hooking your right to your partner's jaw while keeping your left across your stomach as in Fig. 10. Your partner will block the punch with his right, at the same time hooking his left to your stomach, which you must be prepared to block in turn.

You now know how to deliver four of the most effective punches in boxing, and one way to block each. You should also know enough of footwork to step back out of range of punches you can't block. You and your partner are now ready for a bout, where each will be free to employ whatever form of attack his judgment deems best, and when you will

have a chance to learn the meaning of headwork in boxing.

Feinting will come in here. Suppose you feint a straight left at the head, for instance, and your rival's right guard comes up, leaving the stomach exposed to your left hook. Here is employment for your wits. You have already learned to land stiff, effective punches on the bag. You will face a shifty human target with a brain behind it, and to cope with it you must make use of your own brains.

Keep your eyes on your opponent's every movement. Try to get him to attempt leads and blocks that will leave him open to your attack; work fast, and try to land as cleanly as on the dead bag. Avoid pawing and pushing, and wasting your energies in ineffectual movements.



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