

TUTTLE MARTIAL ARTS

# Jeet Kune Do

## BASICS

From basic footwork to training and tournaments—everything you need to get started in Jeet Kune Do



David Cheng



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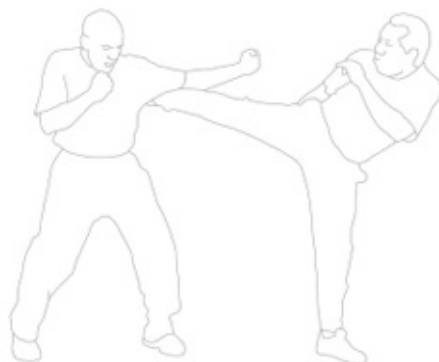
# **jeet kune do basics**

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BASICS

David Cheng



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## DEDICATION

**This book is dedicated first, to God the Father, the Lord Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit, who together are the source of inspiration and guidance in my life.**

**And second, to my wife, Vera, and my children, Lauren and Jonathan, who have supported me and been patient with me as I worked on the book. Much love to you all.**

I WOULD LIKE TO THANK Chris Kent, my teacher, mentor, and friend, for his invaluable instruction in the art of Jeet Kune Do over the years and for opening my eyes to my potential, using Bruce Lee's art as a vehicle.

I would also like to express my thanks to various original students of Bruce Lee who have illuminated my understanding of Jeet Kune Do, namely, Bob Bremer, Richard Bustillo, Dan Inosanto, Pete Jacobs, Taky Kimura, Daniel Lee, Jerry Poteet, Patrick Strong, and Ted Wong. Thanks to second-generation instructors Cass Magda, Tim Tackett, and Dan Sullivan, who have also helped me in my journey.

Thanks also to Jeff Scharlin—my good friend, training partner, Jeet Kune Do brother, and a solo teacher in his own right—for his friendship, suggestions, and assistance in this project. His feedback and criticisms were very helpful.

I would also like to thank Jaimee Itagaki, photographer extraordinaire, for her keen eye and invaluable suggestions in taking the pictures for this book. Her professionalism and easy-going personality helped make the work so enjoyable.

Much appreciation goes to my students who assisted in the photographs for the book, namely, Andrew Kim, Luca Levorato, Jeff Ng, Moamer Qazafi, and Stanley Quon. Thanks also to my other students, who have contributed to my own growth. They are all helping to keep the Jeet Kune Do legacy alive.



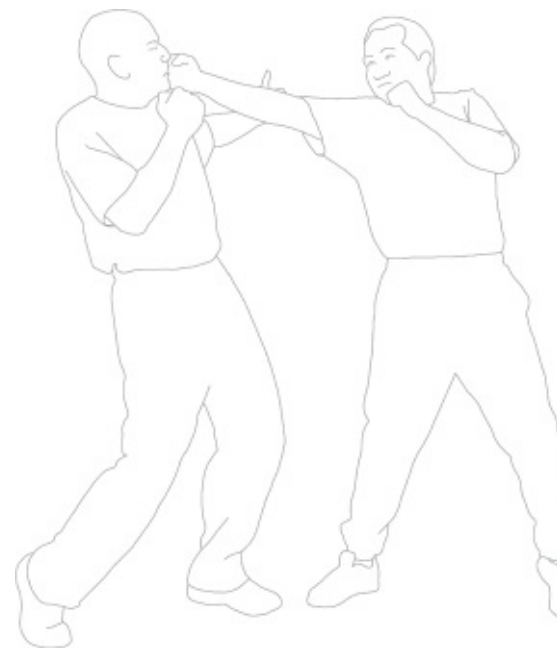
Book participants (left to right): Luca Levorato, Moamer Qazafi, David Cheng, Jeff Scharlin, Andrew Kim, Jeff Ng (not pictured—Stanley Quon)



THERE IS A JOKE that says, “If you ask ten different Jeet Kune Do instructors what Jeet Kune Do is, you will get ten different answers.” Another joke in the same vein asks, “How many Jeet Kune Do instructors does it take to screw in a light bulb?” Answer: “Five—one to screw in the light bulb, and four to tell him that he’s doing it wrong.”

What these bits of humor tell us is that there is wide disagreement about the nature of Jeet Kune Do. Some believe that it is basically a system with certain techniques and principles. Others think it is philosophy, an approach to martial arts that helps each person develop his or her own style of fighting. As with many things, each interpretation has some truth to it.

However, to truly understand Jeet Kune Do, we must examine its roots; we must observe where it has been, as well as where it is today. In these beginning chapters, we will look at how Jeet Kune Do originated and developed. To assist us in our understanding, we will also examine the basic principles that constitute the framework of the art. Finally, we will consider the state of Jeet Kune Do today, in terms of some of the most prominent interpretations. Having this background will give us a good start in appreciating the different elements that make up Jeet Kune Do.





**A**LTHOUGH JEET KUNE DO is a young martial art, it generates more interest than many of its older counterparts. This is due, in large part, to the enigmatic life of its founder, Bruce Lee. We can safely say that Lee is so intertwined with the art that one cannot think of Jeet Kune Do without thinking of Bruce Lee. Therefore, to understand the history and development of Jeet Kune Do, we must examine the evolution of Lee himself as a martial artist.

Lee was born on November 27, 1940, in San Francisco, California. The following year, his family moved to the cramped, tropical environment of Hong Kong where he spent his childhood and teenage years growing up. Early on, Lee was exposed to taijiquan, an art practiced by his father. He also studied a little bit of Hung Gar, a southern style of gung fu (or kungfu). However, his primary form of gung fu training did not begin until his early teens, when he began learning Wing Chun, a close-quarters fighting style that emphasizes hand-trapping techniques. He studied for several years under the supervision of Yip Man, the head instructor of Wing Chun at his school.

Lee was obsessed with Wing Chun and practiced frequently. While other students were content to learn the art as a sport, Lee was interested in learning how to fight. He and other students engaged in several sparring matches with people from outside the school, quickly gaining a formidable reputation. This emphasis on practical, street-oriented testing would later play a major role in the creation of Jeet Kune Do.

During this time, Lee examined other gung fu styles. He also practiced dancing and became the cha cha champion of Hong Kong. The knowledge that he gained from these experiences served as a reservoir of material when he developed his approach to martial arts.

At age eighteen Lee reached a turning point in his life. A rather poor student, he had little prospect of acceptance into college. Also, when he injured someone during a street fight, the parents of the victim lodged a complaint with the local police. Lee's parents, worried about his future, literally shipped him off to the United States so that he could be away from the violent environment and also reclaim his American citizenship. So, in 1959 Lee returned to the place of his birth, San Francisco. After a short stay he relocated to Seattle, Washington, where he enrolled in the Edison Technical School and worked at a local restaurant owned by a family friend.

While attending high school, Lee continued to practice Wing Chun. Jesse Glover, a fellow student at Edison, used to watch Lee as he executed his techniques. Suitably impressed, Glover decided to make friends with the young man so he could learn from him. Lee began to share some of his knowledge with Glover. Glover introduced other friends to Lee, and it was not long before Lee had gathered a small group of followers, eager to learn this little-known and intriguing art. With no *kwong* (school, or training place) readily available, Lee taught his students wherever there was space, including parking lots and outdoor parks.

At first, Lee faithfully taught Wing Chun as he had learned it. However, as he worked out with

different students, he discovered that some of the classical techniques did not work as well in his new circumstances, particularly against the larger American students. This situation compelled Lee to make modifications to his techniques. The changes he made were extensive enough that he no longer felt comfortable calling his art “Wing Chun.” Instead, he eventually renamed it *Jun Fan*, using his own Cantonese name.

Lee graduated from Edison Technical School and enrolled at the University of Washington, where he majored in philosophy. He was deeply fascinated with Chinese philosophy, especially as it related to gung fu. Some of Lee’s students—now including Taky Kimura, who later became his best friend and assistant instructor—encouraged him to start a school and to charge for lessons, so that he would not have to continue doing menial work. As a result, Lee established what would be the first Jun Fan Gung Fu Institute at the University of Washington, where he taught his modified form of Wing Chun.

**W**hen Bruce Lee first developed Jeet Kune Do, he saw it as primarily a combination of Wing Chun, fencing, and boxing. He also considered it a Chinese gung fu system, but without branches, formality, and tradition.

### Defining Jeet Kune Do

**W**hat is Jeet Kune Do (JKD)? Chinese martial art, definitely! It is a kind of Chinese martial art that does away with the distinction of branches, an art that rejects formality, and an art that is liberated from the tradition.” (Lee 1997, p. 47)

In 1964, after getting married, Lee and his new bride moved to Oakland, California, to live with James Lee, an active gung fu practitioner whom he had met several years earlier. Over the years Lee and James developed a strong friendship. James became fascinated with Lee’s incredible speed and power, and endeavored to learn his system of gung fu. At the same time Lee was impressed with James’ accomplishments in weight training, and James introduced him to many of the concepts that Lee later incorporated into his own development. Together, Lee and James decided to establish a second Jun Fan Gung Fu Institute in Oakland. Admission to the Institute was highly selective, and only the most serious candidates were allowed to train in Jun Fan.

Some members of the gung fu community in nearby San Francisco became aware that Lee was teaching non-Chinese students. Both Lee and James disagreed with the traditional idea of teaching gung fu only to persons of Chinese descent, and this upset the traditionalists. They sent

a newly arrived Chinese gung fu teacher to Lee’s school to present an ultimatum: either stop teaching non-Chinese or fight the teacher.

Not one to back off, Lee refused to budge on the issue of teaching non-Chinese, and he accepted the challenge. At first, the representative and his entourage wanted to set up rules, such as no hits to the groin. However, Lee insisted on having no restrictions. The fight occurred behind closed doors. Lee adhered primarily to his modified Wing Chun style during the confrontation, which he eventually won by chasing the challenger all over the room, then keeping him subdued until he gave up.

While there is some dispute as to how long the fight lasted, there is no question that Lee was unhappy with his performance. Even though he won the fight, he felt tired and winded. Lee also found that the close-range fighting techniques of his modified Wing Chun were too limiting, because they did not allow him to end a fight quickly, particularly when his opponent fled from him. Lee realized that he needed to greatly improve his conditioning and that he needed to include other weapons in his art, to deal with opponents when they were farther away.

As a result, Lee started to incorporate more aerobic training, such as running, into his personal program, to strengthen his conditioning. Also, he added intermediate-range kicks from French Savate and Northern gung fu, as well as medium-range punches from Western boxing. He modified the stance so that his strong side, the right lead, was placed forward. Moreover, he made the stance more mobile by incorporating boxing- and fencing-style footwork. While Lee kept some of the trapping techniques

and principles that he inherited from Wing Chun, he discarded others. In order to be incorporated into his approach, a particular technique, whatever its source, had to fit in with the other techniques and represent an efficient way of accomplishing its purpose.

In his research into ultimate combat, Lee also realized that it was best not to defend passively. He concluded that striking as an opponent prepared to attack represented a more efficient and effective way to defend. This idea of intercepting one's opponent became the most significant change in Lee's thinking during this time.



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In the latter part of his life, Lee's ideas on combat and martial arts training proved to be controversial. Many traditional martial artists felt upset and offended at some of his pronouncements. Over time, however, many martial artists have accepted his ideas.

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In 1966 Lee and his family moved to Los Angeles after he signed a contract to appear in a television series that never got off the ground. While on retainer to the studio, Lee had freedom to continue researching and training in martial arts. He spent time teaching Dan Inosanto, a *Kempo* black belt, who had studied with him ever since he served as Lee's escort a few years earlier, when Lee gave a demonstration at Ed Parker's Long Beach International Tournament. During a discussion with Inosanto about his approach to combat, Lee came up with a new name, "Jeet Kune Do"—"the way of the intercepting fist"—which he thought best characterized the essence of his art at this time.

After Lee had been teaching Inosanto and a couple of others for a while in the back of a pharmacy in Chinatown, Lee and Inosanto launched the third Jun Fan Gung Fu Institute, in February 1967, in a nondescript building in the nearby area. Inosanto became Lee's assistant instructor at the Institute. Lee himself taught at the school, and in addition, he took on private students, some recruited from the school. These private sessions gave Lee a chance to experiment with new ideas that he researched with his students acting as willing guinea pigs. Lee also began to study grappling and wrestling with some of the best practitioners of the day.

As the 1960s drew to a close, Lee's skill in speed, power, and closing in on an opponent increased so much that no one could stop him, even when he told opponents what he intended to do. Because no one could stop his strikes, he found it unnecessary to use his trapping skills, although trapping continued to be part of the curriculum at all three Institutes. In 1970, while recuperating from a back injury, Lee recorded many notes and observations on combat, and on Jeet Kune Do in particular. The same year, Lee decided to close all three of his Jun Fan Gung Fu Institutes because he was concerned that it was too easy for a member to take the agenda as "the truth" and the schedule as "the way."

In 1971, dissatisfied with the lack of progress in his acting career in the United States, Lee traveled to Hong Kong in hopes of establishing himself as a martial arts film star. Also, he believed that the best way to showcase his combative philosophy to a wide audience was through motion pictures.

His own thinking about martial arts continued to evolve as well. He saw that interception, which was so important, was not necessarily the answer for all situations or for all students. Lee began to look at Jeet Kune Do as the "way of no way," in which a martial artist was not bound by any particular style or method, but could use all ways and all methods to adapt to any kind of opponent.

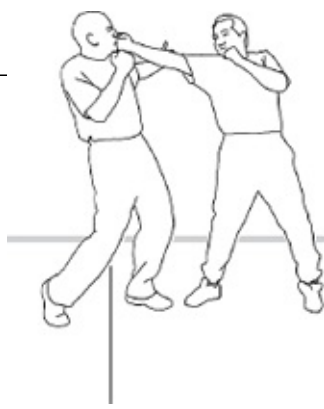
Nowhere was this view more graphically displayed than in the fighting scenes he managed to film for the unfinished movie *Game of Death*. In that film Lee had to fight a Filipino Escrima master, a Hapkido stylist, and a seven-foot freestyle fighter in the form of Kareem Abdul-Jabbar. He had to adapt his own fighting methods and tactics to deal with the particular challenges presented by each opponent. Lee showed how one must be proficient in all ranges of combat and with all kinds of tools. The few sequences that he filmed showed a martial artist who was equally adept at kicking, punching, trapping, grappling, and weaponry. This was perhaps the highest evolution of Jeet Kune Do that Lee achieved before his untimely death in July 1973.

**L**ee was against what he called the "classical mess" practiced by other martial artists because he believed that what were once fluid, realistic movements had settled into mechanical routines. He wanted martial artists to return to the original ideal of freedom in fighting.

When Lee passed away, the world lost one of the century's greatest martial artists. Moreover, some thought, and still believe, that his art of Jeet Kune Do died with him. Although undoubtedly Lee took some of what he knew with him to the grave, much of what is now regarded as Jeet Kune Do has, fortunately, been preserved through a combination of several sources. Lee's surviving assistant instructors, Taky Kimura and Dan Inosanto, continue to pass on the knowledge that Lee gave them. Other first-generation and later students are also active, to different degrees, in propagating Lee's art as they learned it. Lee's notes, which he documented many of his thoughts about combat, also provide important knowledge about Jeet Kune Do. Finally, Lee's martial art films show different aspects of his fighting philosophy in action, providing further insight into his art. The compilation of this knowledge

will allow future generations to learn about, and to perpetuate, Jeet Kune Do.





**J**EET KUNE DO contains a definite structure and specific principles that have guided its development. As Lee examined different martial arts, he used these principles to evaluate whether or not a particular technique should be included in the art.

Each technique had to fit into the existing structure and work efficiently with other techniques in order to be included.

The maxim “Absorb what is useful, reject what is useless, and add what is specifically your own” characterizes the “research” and “experimental” aspects of Jeet Kune Do. In his research Lee tried to identify techniques that could enhance his fighting style and to understand how other stylists fought so that he could develop ways to counter them. He critically read thousands of books on judo, boxing, wrestling, fencing, and other arts, often underlining the text and making notes in the margins whenever a particular idea struck him as significant. Lee also attended demonstrations and martial arts tournaments, carefully watching participants in order to understand the essence of their style. He sought out and trained with martial artists from many disciplines so that he could learn from them.

### JKD Philosophy in the Movies

**W**atch Bruce Lee's films carefully, and you can catch bits of his martial arts principles. In *Enter the Dragon*, he explains to the senior abbot that it is not he who hits, but that “it” hits all by itself. This is an example of the principle of nonintention.

Lee concluded that kata, or forms, had limited usefulness because they bore little resemblance to real combat. Recognizing that fights did not fall into established patterns, he regarded the exercises as “swimming on dry land.” Lee believed that to become an effective fighter, one had to actually swim in the water, which meant sparring.

Lee also came to understand that, in order to adapt to the changing dynamics of a real fight, a person had to develop skill in combat at any range. He realized, for example, that Wing Chun worked best at close range, but that other methods were needed for both close range and other distances. Therefore, Lee incorporated kicking techniques from other gung fu systems, as well as Savate, for intermediate-range fighting. He also took punching techniques from Western boxing for intermediate range. Finally, he added chokes, strangleholds, locks, throws, and takedowns for close range.

Lee concluded that it was important to aggressively close in on an opponent, rather than passively wait for an opponent to approach. Further, it was better to avoid being hit than to block an attack. Thus, Lee drew on fencing and Western boxing because their superior footwork and mobility allowed him to quickly bridge the gap when attacking and to quickly evade when being attacked.



Many of the principles of Jeet Kune Do were borrowed from Western fencing. They include broken rhythm, interception, and simple and direct movements. Indeed, Lee's art has been characterized as “fencing without a foil.”

Many martial arts systems that Lee examined were of the “block and hit” variety. When a person was attacked, that person would block the strike and follow up with a strike. Through fencing

Lee found a more efficient way to deal with an attack. A good fencer would not merely block or parry an attack but would strike as an opponent prepared to attack, thus intercepting the attack. Lee applied this principle to empty-handed fighting, meaning that a person could intercept with a punch or kick as the opponent started to attack.

Lee realized that no single martial arts system had all the answers to every situation. Thus, to stick to one particular “way” of fighting, as he called it, was to cling to “partiality.” Rather than be bound to any particular style, Lee strove for “totality” in fighting, using any method that worked, no matter what its source. He believed that individuals should train their “tools” (the parts of the body used for fighting) for maximum effectiveness, according to their own abilities, and that this training was more important than any style. Individuals should experience “freedom of expression” in fighting, so that they can act in response to reality, rather than to a preconceived notion of what a fight “should” be like.

Lee’s extensive research led to the following principles, which guided the development of his art:

- **Simple, Direct, and Economical:** Techniques should not be overly complicated, but should go directly to the intended target with a minimum of movement. A strike along a straight line, rather than a wide curved path, is more efficient.
- **Nontelegraphic Movement:** One should not show any unnecessary preparatory movement that would alert an opponent as to what one is about to do.
- **Nonclassical:** No set or fixed forms or patterns are utilized, because they do not represent actual fight situations.



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Generally speaking, Lee did not see value in the practice of gung fu forms and karate katas, because they did not match actual fighting situations. The exceptions were the *lum tao* from Wing Chun and a kicking set that he had developed.

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- **Strong Side Forward:** The strongest weapons should be placed in front, facing the opponent, where they can reach the target faster and do the most damage. The weaker weapons are placed at the rear, where they become stronger because they have to travel a farther distance to the target.
- **Hand before Foot:** When one is executing hand strikes, the hand should strike the target slightly before the lead foot lands. In this way one’s body weight is behind the strike.
- **Centerline:** A principle carried over from Wing Chun, maintaining the centerline enables one to control an opponent’s balance, position, leverage, and ability to attack. Strikes down the centerline are difficult for the opponent to see and to defend against.
- **No Passive Moves:** Rather than merely block or parry a strike, one should either combine defensive moves with offensive moves or defend by counterattacking.
- **Longest Weapon to the Nearest Target:** In attacking, one should employ the weapon with the longest reach against the closest target presented by the opponent. This allows one to strike the opponent as quickly as possible.
- **Adaptability:** Because the dynamics of a fight constantly change, one must quickly change to respond appropriately. A fighter must not be bound by fixed techniques or patterns, but use whatever works, without limitation.
- **Broken Rhythm:** Disrupting the rhythm of an opponent allows one to catch an opponent short while he is engrossed in his own tempo, making it harder for him or her to defend or counter.
- **Water in the Hose:** This term describes the idea of maximizing the power of strikes by training

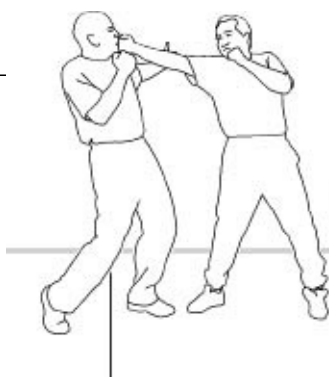
with them until they are like water bursting through a fire hose when they hit the target.

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- **Whip:** By striking with a punch or kick and then recoiling like the action of a whip, one can retract the striking limb quickly. This action is combined with the “water in the hose” principle so that power and speed can be maximized.
- **Short Arc Principle:** After a punch hits, the hand should move in a small arc as it returns to its ready position. In that way it goes in a continuous path from beginning to end without stopping, which brings the hand back rapidly.
- **Nonintention:** One should strike without thinking or conscious decision. Thinking about hitting slows down a fighter’s reaction. Instead, it should be as if the limb strikes by itself, without thought.
- **Simultaneous Parry and Hit:** Instead of blocking a strike and then returning a strike, it is more efficient to parry and hit at the same time.
- **Hammer:** By lowering one’s lead hand slightly at the elbow, with a motion like a hammer’s, one can subtly gain distance on an opponent. This enables one to strike from a closer distance to reach the target more quickly.

**M**y instructor, Chris Kent, used to describe Jeet Kune Do as a “principled martial art.” The principles explained why certain things were done. The techniques represented the expressions of the principles. Both were an integral part of the overall art.





IT IS EASY to be confused about what constitutes Jeet Kune Do because people view the art in different ways. When Bruce Lee was still alive, relatively few people were trained in the art and Lee could exercise control over what was taught. Since his passing, different interpretations of Jeet Kune Do have arisen. This has occurred because Jeet Kune Do itself is somewhat open-ended, with no fixed number of techniques and, in most cases, no set curriculum. In addition, Jeet Kune Do encourages individual freedom of expression, such that different instructors emphasize different aspects.

As a result, different camps have emerged, each claiming to follow the true path laid down by Lee. These range from individuals who believe strongly in preserving Jeet Kune Do just as it was practiced when Lee was alive, to those who believe in Jeet Kune Do as primarily a framework for formulating an individualized approach to fighting. The following is an overview of the major interpretations.

## Jun Fan/Modified Wing Chun

Individuals in this category practice techniques and methods that Lee embraced during his early years in the United States. They consist primarily of the modified Wing Chun trapping that Lee taught at that time. Some practitioners faithfully preserve Lee's teachings. Others have modified the art, bringing their own distinctiveness to it. Strictly speaking, this art is pre-Jeet Kune Do. Some believe that it is actually more practical and combative than Jeet Kune Do. These methods were taught and developed at the Seattle Jun Fan Gung Fu Institute. Hence, they are regarded as arising during the "Seattle Era."

## Original Jeet Kune Do

These practitioners emphasize the art as taught and practiced by Lee from the mid-1960s to 1973. This interpretation consists of some of the Jun Fan trapping methods from the earlier period and the fencing, kickboxing, Western boxing, and grappling influences that were later added. Original Jeet Kune Do was taught at the Oakland Jun Fan Gung Fu Institute and the Los Angeles Chinatown Jun Fan Gung Fu Institute. Hence, the art, as taught during this time, is known as the "Oakland Era" and "Chinatown Era."

The strongest push for perpetuating this interpretation of Jeet Kune Do came from the Bruce Lee Educational Foundation during the 1990s. This organization was composed of Lee's widow and daughter; first-generation students of Lee from the Seattle, Oakland, and Los Angeles eras; and a few second-generation students. The efforts of these individuals exposed more people to Lee's art, as it had existed during his lifetime.

Proponents of this interpretation are often accused of remaining stuck in the past and refusing to change with the times. However, they view the original art as remaining effective because principles

such as directness, economy of motion, and interception remain just as valid today as they were back then. They believe that, rather than adding to Lee's art, as many seemingly have done, practitioners should concentrate on refining their techniques and improving their skills.

## Jeet Kune Do Concepts

### Origin of the Term "Concepts"

Because he promised Bruce Lee that he would never commercialize his art, at seminars Dan Inosanto would tell participants that he could not teach Jeet Kune Do but would show them concepts from the art. Savvy promoters began to advertise that Inosanto would teach "Jeet Kune Do Concepts."

These practitioners view Jeet Kune Do not as a system or style, but rather as a philosophical approach towards developing a personal expression of fighting. Although they regard Lee's original art as a starting place, they believe that a student should evolve from there. Just as Lee researched many arts during his lifetime, Concepts proponents encourage martial artists to examine different styles to add those elements that work best for them.

Hence, Concepts practitioners will often study, in addition to Lee's original art, Filipino martial arts, Muay Thai, shoot wrestling, Silat, and Brazilian jujitsu. They stress Lee's philosophical approach to martial arts, rather than specific techniques and training methods, as the true spirit of Jeet Kune Do.



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"My purpose in creating Jeet Kune Do was not to compare with other branches of martial arts. Anything that becomes a branch would induce bad feeling. Once there is a formation of a branch, then things seem to stop. Students would labor for regulations and rules. The meaning of martial art would be lost." (Lee 1997, p. 327)

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Some think that Concepts practitioners have watered down Lee's art by adding other arts. They believe that some of Jeet Kune Do's principles, such as simplicity, strong side forward, and directness have been compromised as influences from other arts have crept in. Concepts students respond that Lee's original art can be preserved but that Jeet Kune Do is a highly individualized process to explore one's own freedom of expression.

### Is JKD a Style or a Philosophy?

Although some think it is one or the other, it really is both. Jeet Kune Do is not a fixed style, but it does have certain structures and techniques that give it a certain look. It also contains philosophical elements that provide reasons for its structures and techniques.

## Functional Jeet Kune Do

More recently, some are pushing the definition of Jeet Kune Do even further. Calling their approach "Functional Jeet Kune Do," they seek to recapture the notion of training and fighting with "aliveness." Dissatisfied with what they regard as "dead pattern" drills taught by many Jeet Kune Do instructors, they emphasize constant training against moving and resisting partners rather than passive recipients.

The proponents of this approach do not carry on most of Lee's original art. Indeed, they regard trapping techniques to be virtually useless against modern-day fighters. Instead of the kicking, punching, trapping, and grappling methods that are part of many Jeet Kune Do curricula, Function

Jeet Kune Do practitioners train in Western boxing, Thai boxing, Greco-Roman wrestling, and Brazilian jujitsu. They believe that these training methods help students become competent fighters more quickly than traditional approaches to Jeet Kune Do. As a result, they probably have more in common with students of mixed martial arts than with other Jeet Kune Do students.

There are undoubtedly practitioners who hold other interpretations of Jeet Kune Do, but these are the more prominent approaches practiced today. Proponents of each interpretation sincerely believe that they are following the path that Lee laid down.

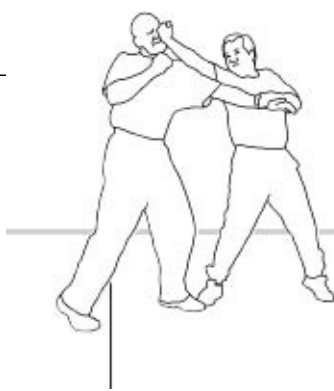
**T**he emergence of different, often contradictory, interpretations of Jeet Kune Do may be unfortunate, but not surprising. It parallels what has occurred in other martial arts, such as Wing Chun and Filipino Kali, Escrima, and Arnis. A divergence of views often happens after the founder of an art passes away.

**J** Jeet Kune Do, by definition, allows practitioners to evolve their own expression of fighting. However, it remains important to preserve and promote the art as Lee researched, practiced, and taught it, so that future generations can benefit from the knowledge and training that he developed.

**I**T TAKES A SIGNIFICANT COMMITMENT of time, energy, and usually money to study martial art such as Jeet Kune Do. Although you can potentially learn useful self-defense skills in a short period of time, in order to gain proficiency in the art as a whole, you must be willing to make an investment of your resources. Hence, rather than dive blindly, it makes sense for someone who is thinking about Jeet Kune Do to understand what to expect in a teacher and in his or her training.

In the next few chapters, we will take a look at how a prospective student can go about selecting an appropriate school or teacher. The task is not as simple as looking up a training facility in the phone book. We will also examine what a typical Jeet Kune Do class is like and what to expect during the first few months of training. Finally, the important topic of safety in training will be considered. Having this background will make it easier for you to make an informed and intelligent decision about training in Jeet Kune Do.





**S**TUDENTS WHO WANT TO STUDY Jeet Kune Do will learn best by training directly with a knowledgeable instructor. The challenge for many prospective students is to find such a person. While it is relatively easy to locate a school that teaches a traditional art, such as karate or taekwondo, there are not many Jeet Kune Do teachers around. The majority of those who teach some form of Jeet Kune Do reside in the United States and Europe, so individuals who live in other countries will have a difficult time finding an instructor.

#### Learning from Videotapes and Books

**S**tudents who live too far from a Jeet Kune Do teacher can still learn, to some extent, by watching a Jeet Kune Do videotape or reading a Jeet Kune Do book. There are a number of excellent videotapes and books available that feature top-notch instructors. The Resources section at the end of the book lists some of these videotapes and books.

To complicate matters, many of those who instruct in Jeet Kune Do do not publicize that fact. They maintain a low profile, quietly teaching small groups of students in garages and backyards. One usually hears about them only through word of mouth. So, while you can easily pinpoint a school that offers traditional martial arts training in the telephone book, you are not likely to come across a Jeet Kune Do instructor that way.

Someone looking for a local school that teaches a traditional art can easily identify a large organization or association that governs that style. These groups can refer individuals who are interested in learning their art to member schools in their area. However, there is no widespread ranging group that oversees the various Jeet Kune Do schools and instructors that a prospective student can contact.

Given these difficulties, you must possess a strong commitment to learning Jeet Kune Do

in order to find the right school or instructor. So how can you find out who is teaching, and where? One place to start is the Internet. A number of Jeet Kune Do teachers and schools have Web sites that can be accessed easily through the various search engines. Another source is Web sites devoted to the subject of Jeet Kune Do or Bruce Lee. These sometimes have links to various Jeet Kune Do schools.

Some well-known Jeet Kune Do instructors have their own associations and students who are authorized to teach. They maintain lists and contact information for these students as part of their own Web sites. There are also other individuals who, as a service to prospective students, keep lists of Jeet Kune Do instructors as part of their Web sites.

Another way that a prospective student can use the Internet to find a Jeet Kune Do instructor is to post a message on a Jeet Kune Do discussion forum. Because these forums attract a large number of people from all over the world, there is a good chance that someone will know of a Jeet Kune Do instructor in a certain area.

A few Jeet Kune Do instructors and schools advertise in martial arts magazines, so it is worth the

#### Seminar Training

**M**any Jeet Kune Do instructors travel to different cities to give seminars. This is an excellent way for students with no access to a local school to obtain periodic training. While in town, the seminar instructor may be available for private lessons as well.



effort to check out those publications. Also, martial arts supply stores will sometimes have brochures or flyers advertising the services of a local Jeet Kune Do teacher.

Even after you have found a Jeet Kune Do instructor, you must evaluate whether that instructor offers what you want to learn. Because of the myriad of interpretations of Jeet Kune Do, what particular Jeet Kune Do instructor teaches may or may not be what you want to learn. Different instructors vary significantly in terms of the material that they teach. Some teachers offer training in the curriculum that Lee practiced before he formally developed Jeet Kune Do. Some emphasize Original Jeet Kune Do, the art that Lee taught and practiced when he was still alive. Still others offer training in Jeet Kune Do Concepts, sometimes teaching other arts separately or blended with some of the Jeet Kune Do techniques. There are those who offer limited training in Lee's original art and emphasize other arts that they like better.

### Is Certification Necessary?

If instructors are certified, that certainly gives them a measure of credibility and gives you assurance regarding their skill. However, you must also consider the source of the certification. Also, there are many knowledgeable individuals who have the capacity to teach—and may, in fact, be teaching—but are not formally certified. As in many fields, let the buyer beware.

The decision to train with a particular teacher or at a specific school should not be taken lightly, because the teacher or school will greatly influence your understanding of Jeet Kune Do. You should take certain steps in deciding whether or not to train. You should have in mind whether you are interested specifically in studying the actual training methods, techniques, and principles that Lee taught. If so, then you need to make sure that the teacher has sufficient background in the original art and can teach it. You should visit an actual class or training session to see how the teacher relates to students. You should talk to current students to determine what they like and do not like about the training. If one is available, take an introductory class or commit to a trial period to experience the training firsthand. You should also gather information about the instructor's background, experience, lineage, and certification. Most importantly, you should define your training goals and evaluate whether the school or instructor can effectively assist you in meeting

those goals.

### Group vs. Private Training

A group class provides the opportunity to work out with different types of people with different energy levels, personalities, and so on. Private training involves more personal attention and interaction with an instructor, but usually costs more. It may be a better way to start, however.



**I**N ONE SENSE, there is no such thing as a typical Jeet Kune Do class, because students must train in a variety of elements. The art has no set curriculum, no set number of techniques, and no required number of drills. Lee recognized that no two students are alike, so when he taught, every session was different.

Individual instructors, even within the same school, have different teaching styles and approach the material differently. One instructor may emphasize kickboxing, for example, while another may stress trapping. Moreover, the particular interpretation of Jeet Kune Do that an instructor embraces will influence the material taught.

**A**t the Chinatown Jun Fan Gung Fu Institute, students wore naval-style boxing headgear (with the bar across), boxing gloves or Kempo gloves, kendo armor, and baseball shin guards. While some of the specifics have changed, the basic setup remains the same even today.

## An Original Jeet Kune Do Class

That being said, in a class that focuses on Original Jeet Kune Do, there are some common elements that students will often see. Usually, students will open the class with the Jeet Kune Do salutation, paying respect to the founder of the art. They may shadowbox and skip rope to help get their blood flowing. Then the instructor, often addressed as *sifu*, will lead the class through stretches and warm-up exercises. Typically, students will do static and dynamic leg stretches to prepare for kicking drills. Also, students will frequently execute stomach exercises, such as

crunches.

When the warm-up is finished, the instructor will teach students punches and kicks. Students will divide into pairs and practice a specific punch or kick that the instructor shows them. The teacher will carefully monitor the students and correct them individually. Drills can involve single or multiple strikes, depending upon what is being covered. Students use this time to develop their tools and refine their execution. This part of the class is typically the most challenging from a conditioning standpoint.

**S**ome of the equipment that is common in martial arts schools today was pioneered by Bruce Lee. His foam football shield was the forerunner of the kicking shield. The leather focus mitts that he employed foreshadowed the different types of punching mitts available today.

The teacher may also teach defensive maneuvers to the students. One student may throw punches or kicks at another student, who practices a specific defensive move against the strike. Counterattack drills may be trained as well, so that students learn to strike or kick in response to being attacked.

Next, the instructor may instruct in close-quarters techniques such as trapping or stand-up grappling. Again, students work in pairs, taking turns practicing the techniques. The instructor will correct students as needed.

At more advanced levels, students may spar. Typically, the instructor will teach drills that emphasize qualities such as timing, rhythm, and

distance. Students might be allowed to spar using only certain tools, such as lead hand against lead hand, or lead hand against lead foot. Only when they have sufficient experience will an instructor let students use all of their tools in a freestyle manner.

## Gear, Equipment, and Clothing

In Jeet Kune Do students do not practice kata, forms, or strikes in the air. Instead, they strike and kick resistance equipment. To improve speed and accuracy, a student punches and kicks a focus mitt held by a training partner. Focus mitts are superb pieces of equipment that can be utilized in many different ways by an experienced trainer. Students frequently wear bag gloves or open-finger gloves to protect their hands when they strike the focus mitts.

To strengthen power in kicking, trainers hold kicking shields against their bodies so that students can apply their kicks full force without fear of hurting their partner. Some schools also make use of Muay Thai pads, which are heavily reinforced and can take punishment from hard kicks, elbow strikes, and knee strikes.

For sparring the equipment worn varies according to the intensity of the training. Students must wear a mouthpiece to protect their jaw from the occasional hits to the face. For more intense sparring protective headgear should



Lee believed that learning one or two techniques was enough for a single training session. He thought that once a student began to spar, he would cease trying to accumulate techniques. Instead, the student would devote his time to practicing simple techniques for correct execution.

be worn. Students also must wear boxing gloves, with or without hand wraps, both to protect their own hands and to soften any blows that they inflict on their partner. If kicking is allowed during the sparring, then shin guards are recommended. Students may also wear chest armor to protect the upper body from hard punches and kicks. Male students should wear a cup to protect the groin area.

Boxing gloves tend to be unwieldy for trapping training because students need to use their hands and fingers. Open-finger Kempo gloves are better suited for trapping because they allow the fingers to trap and grab. A slight drawback is that they do not have as much padding as boxing gloves for punching. In these situations students should also wear protective headgear, mouthpieces, and perhaps body armor to protect themselves from the punches.

Other types of equipment used for solo training include heavy bags for developing powerful kicks and punches, top and bottom bags that students can use for striking and practicing ducking and slipping, and the *mook jong*, or wooden dummy, employed for trapping and forearm conditioning.

Because Jeet Kune Do training is different from classical martial arts training, students do not wear *gi*, uniforms, or colored belts. Instead, students generally wear loose clothing such as T-shirts, tank tops, sweatpants, and shorts. Some schools will require students to wear official school clothing, but the emphasis is still on casual, comfortable clothing. Men are encouraged to wear athletic supporters, while women should wear protective bras.

One of the attractive aspects of learning Jeet Kune Do is that no two classes are the same. One week, students might focus on certain kicking drills. Two weeks later, they may be working primarily on trapping. Because a wide variety of skills must be trained, classes tend to cover different material at different times.



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