

The Geometry of 3 Step Sparring

When you form a Walking Stance Middle Front Punch, your “make your fist vertical line with your toes” – that is, if you are standing so that your toes are just touching a wall, your knuckles should be just touching the same wall. Similarly, when you form Walking Stance Middle Inner Forearm Block, your fist is also in a vertical line with your toes – your arm is bent, but your body is half-facing.

This means that if we measure so that our toes line up perfectly with our partner's toes, we should find that when we perform middle-punch-to-middle-block, our knuckles will barely graze. Obviously, this is not the correct measure for this combination! In practice, we need to be closer, by about half a foot length. Consequently, our measure for middle-punch-to-middle-block should be such that our toes line up with the centre of our partner's foot.



(Our walking stance is one shoulder width wide, measured from the middle of our feet; our parallel stance is one shoulder width wide, measured from the outside of our feet. Our walking stance is thus two half-foot-widths – or one foot width – wider than our parallel stance. This is why, when we face our partner so that our parallel stances align, we don't stand on his foot when we step forward!)

When you form a Walking Stance High Front Punch, your “make your fist vertical line with your instep” – that is, if you are standing so that your toes are just touching a wall, your knuckles should be not quite able to reach the same wall, by about half the length of your foot. Your arm is straight, so when you rotate your shoulder to lift your fist, it starts to scribe a circle back towards you, and won't reach as far towards the wall any more. When you form Walking Stance High Inner Forearm Block, however, your fist is still in a vertical line with your toes – your arm is bent, so the circle doesn't apply.



This means that our previous measure will be too far away. The block is in the same place, but the punch is shorter by half the length of our foot. When we measure for high block to high punch, therefore, we need to be closer by that same half-foot-length. Before, we measured halfway along the foot; now, we measure all the way – toe to heel.

If the high punch is instead meeting a rising block, our distance must change again. Rising block meets the attack much closer to the defender's body than the high block does, so in order for the techniques to meet appropriately, we must measure closer – in this case, heel-to-heel. (When you're measuring, this feels *really close*, but once your partner starts moving as well, it's not so bad.) Conveniently, this is the same measure we use for a couple of other attacks – low punch to low block, or low front snap kick to low block, for example.



When the attacker steps forward, walking stance to walking stance, he will step outside-inside-outside – or, if you prefer, to the right, to the right, to the right.



If we are using L stance instead of walking stance, then – because L stance is narrower than parallel stance – the initial step will be to the left of the defender's foot. The stepping will be inside, outside, inside... or to the left, to the left, to the left.



If there is a small disparity in height between partners, the taller person should use L stance, while the shorter uses walking stance. This will allow the length of each stance to be approximately the same. (If there is a large disparity in height, those people should not perform 3 Step Sparring together..) Since L stance is narrower than walking stance, the taller attacker will step between his partner's feet each time, inside, inside, inside (or to the left, to the right, to the left).



For other combinations of attack and defence, you'll need to figure out the appropriate measure for yourselves. Remember, 3 Step Sparring is about teaching accuracy of measurement through repetition, so it's important to have your distances exact *before* you practise a thousand times!