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Muay Thai Weapons

In its original form, *muay* consisted of an arsenal of nine weapons -- the head, fists, elbows, knees and feet -- known collectively as *na-wa arwud*. Although in modern Muay Thai, both amateur and professional, using the head to butt an opponent is no longer permissible, you still have at your disposal within your own body a formidable fighting force capable of devastating an opponent. Whereas other martial arts which use no other weaponry, like judo, karate and taekwondo, make extensive use of the hands and feet -- and karate and taekwondo both permit the use of elbows and knees in training -- Muay Thai is unique in the way it uses all parts of the body, including the elbows and knees for both training and competitions.



One of the basic key skills of Muay Thai is learning how to coordinate the four weapons and the five attacking techniques they represent:

| Part of the body | | Attacking technique | |
|------------------|-------------|---------------------|----------------------------|
| English | Thai | English | Thai |
| Fist | <i>Mud</i> | Punch | <i>Shok</i> |
| Elbow | <i>Sork</i> | Elbow Strike | <i>Dhee Sork, Fun Sork</i> |
| Knee | <i>Kow</i> | Knee Kick | <i>Dhee Kow, Taeng Kow</i> |
| Foot | <i>Tao</i> | Kick | <i>Dhe</i> |
| | | Foot-Thrust | <i>Teeb</i> |

As the chart shows, there is a one-to-one correlation between weapons and techniques, except in the case of the feet, which can deploy two techniques. *Khru Muay* sometimes ask their students -- especially young fighters -- to remember the following rule:

**Kick loses to punch, punch loses to knee,
knee loses to elbow, elbow loses to kick**

Here kick includes the associated foot-thrust technique. It is a never-ending circle, encapsulating the concept that you must practice and aim to be equally skillful in using all the Muay Thai weapons. To be very good at one but weak in another will put you at an immediate disadvantage!

For the beginner, trying to master even just a few varieties of each technique can very soon add up to a confusing mass of facts and instructions: Should my knee be moving horizontally or diagonally? What should my arms be doing at the same time? Isn't there something else I should be doing? To try to clear the way through at least some of this confusion, the at-a-glance, self-help charts given on the next pages have been formulated. Use them as a quick reference then follow them up with the full details given later in the chapter as and when required.

The first photograph in each sequence (marked "Stance") shows the fighter in the Muay Thai Stance, from which all techniques commence. No caption is provided except in the case(s) where an additional comment is necessary.





Knee-Kick

(Dhee Kow - ตีเข่า)

The bony joint between your femur (thigh-bone) and tibia (shin-bone), including the patella (knee-cap), which protrudes when the leg is bent, is another offensive weapon in the Muay Thai arsenal.

A knee-kick (*Dhee Kow* or *Taeng Kow* in Thai) involves bending and raising your knee, then striking the target with either the point of your knee or the inner part of the knee-joint. When you deploy your knee in this way, make sure that your toes are extended straight downwards in a continuous line from your shin to increase its sharpness and power.

The basic forms of Knee-Kick listed below are detailed in the following pages.

| English | Thai | Transliteration |
|-------------------------|-----------|--------------------|
| 1. Straight Knee-Kick | เข่าตรง | <i>Kow Dhrong</i> |
| 2. Diagonal Knee-Kick | เข่าเฉียง | <i>Kow Chiyang</i> |
| 3. Curving Knee-Kick | เข่าโค้ง | <i>Kow Kouwng</i> |
| 4. Horizontal Knee-Kick | เข่าตัด | <i>Kow Dhad</i> |
| 5. Knee Slap | เข่าตบ | <i>Kow Dhob</i> |
| 6. Knee Bomb | เข่าโยน | <i>Kow Youwn</i> |
| 7. Flying Knee-Kick | เข่าลอย | <i>Kow Loy</i> |





Almost all forms of the knee-kick can originate from the basic Muay Thai Stance. When you are practicing (or have no partner available), use only your knee without grasping the opponent's neck with your hands. This lessens the power of impact but it is a good form of training. However, with one or two exceptions, the different knee-kicking techniques are generally used in combination with one or both hands, which grasp and pull on the opponent's neck in the direction of the on-coming knee as it is being thrust towards the target. The photos therefore illustrate this combined "pull and thrust" technique.

You should always aim to grasp the opponent's neck from the inside (i.e. inside the opponent's arms) as this enables you to secure the firmest grip. If you grasp from the outside (i.e. allowing your opponent's arms to be inside your own) your hold on the neck can be easily knocked away. However, a word of warning: although the "arms inside" rule is undoubtedly best, it does give your opponent the opportunity to launch an elbow attack, so be on your guard!

You can bring the knee-kick into play when the opponent is at close quarters, and occasionally in a long-range attack, like The Flying Knee-Kick. You should incline your head and tuck in your chin when using your knee offensively, but be careful: do not fall into the trap of lowering your eyes as well as your head. Watch your opponent closely, as they will invariably counter with a punch or an elbow strike.

In addition to being an offensive weapon, you can also use your knee defensively, as it offers effective protection against your opponent's knee-kicks or foot-thrusts (cf. Chapter 8, "Basic Plus", p. and p.)

Grasping the opponent's neck with the arms correctly positioned on the inside.





1. The Straight Knee-Kick

Thai: เข่าตรง - *Kow Dhrong*

Targets: Abdomen, solar plexus

Focus: Grasping and pulling the opponent's neck with both hands, the knee is raised directly to impact against the target.

Step by Step



Reminder: Your face should be slightly inclined, with your chin tucked in protectively against the base of the throat. Remember to observe your opponent closely!



Rear Straight Knee-Kick

1. Lean forwards, transferring your body-weight to your left foot, and firmly grasp your opponent's neck with both hands.
2. With a twist of the right hip over to the left for extra force, thrust your right knee up against the target, the toes of your right foot pointing directly downwards to the floor, while simultaneously pulling down on your opponent's neck. (When adopting this method, your body will naturally lean slightly backwards, with the heel of your left foot raised off the ground).



Lead Straight Knee-Kick

If you wish to employ this technique with your left knee, here are the basics. Body-weight on your right foot, grasp your opponent's neck. Thrust your left knee up (Remember the toes!) while pulling down on your opponent's neck.

