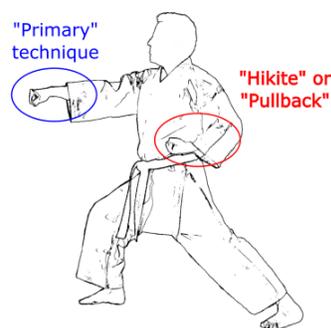


## Conditioning for Martial Arts Emphasizing the Hikite Movement

Martial arts is a physically and mentally challenging pursuit. One only need to participate in a two-minute sparring session or attempt to complete a 45 minute warm-up of kihon (basics) to appreciate the skill and conditioning of those that make it appear effortless. And while conditioning encompasses many different aspects from cardio to endurance to strength, for this paper, I will focus on one specific action associated with martial arts called Hikite, its importance and methods for practitioners to improve their conditioning and execution of this technique.

Hikite is an essential action for a martial artist. Hiki - pulling and Te - hand may be understood as the non-striking hand's movement away from the target and back into a position alongside the hip. This movement is often used as a trigger to begin a strike during kihon drills. It is a helpful mechanism to create additional force by generating a whipping action from the body core through the shoulder into the elbow and eventually releasing at the wrist/hand.



Less obvious reasons for using hikite, and perhaps even more important as the karateka develops a fuller understanding of martial arts, is the effect of the pulling action on, and the tactile awareness of, your adversary. The pulling action acts to disrupt your adversary, helping to destroy his structure and balance. This momentary advantage can be significant if the karateka quickly follows with a movement to bring the conflict to an end. Along with the structural advantage gained hikite provides a tactile awareness of the adversary. With practice a karateka learns that if you know where an opponent's elbow is, you know intuitively where the shoulder, neck and head will be too. Finally hikete can help improve the effect of a strike. By pulling the target closer to the strike, a karateka creates a situation of opposing forces coming together (i.e., think of two cars colliding head-on instead of one car hitting a parked car).

Knowing that hikete is of benefit and should be used when possible, how would conditioning assist in making it more effective? Practicing the technique and incorporating exercises that mirror the movement into workouts will reinforce the muscle memory while improving overall body control. Within the dojo one can emphasize the pulling action by focusing

on the muscles of the back to initiate movement during kihon exercises. For example, during choku-zuki (straight thrust) exercises a karateka can place emphasis on initiating each thrust with the leading arm being drawn toward the body. During self-defense technique practice a student can focus on the parry and positioning hand. Outside of the dojo, one can perform a variety of exercises designed to strengthen the muscles associated with this pulling movement. Seated cable rows, dumbbell rows and pull-ups can aid in improving strength in the latissimus dorsi, trapezius and rear deltoids. These muscles are the primary muscles used in Hikite. To a lesser degree biceps help augment the pulling action however the hikite action should not be thought of as an arm initiated movement. To fully benefit from the movement, and to ensure that there is consistency in the action, Hikite should be initiated from the core muscles. Additionally, full range of motion during these exercises will help the karateka improve effective range. Even exercising the chest and middle/front deltoids would aid in this endeavor as these muscles will help balance the karateka's musculature system, specifically the antagonist muscles for this movement. Resistance training need not be made with heavy weight. Conditioning to improve hikite is best achieved through consistent practice in the dojo supplemented with outside weight training focused on core strength improvement. Finally, resistance bands provide feedback in the form of feel and are encouraged to be used.

The ultimate goal of conditioning with an emphasis on hikite is to improve the practitioners ability to protect oneself via the hikite movement. Through the use of specific training inside and outside of the dojo, a student can improve this technique.

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