

SANDA CHINESE KICKBOXING



"THE ORIGINAL MMA"



The Fundamentals of Sanda : Powerful Techniques and Training Principles

Introduction

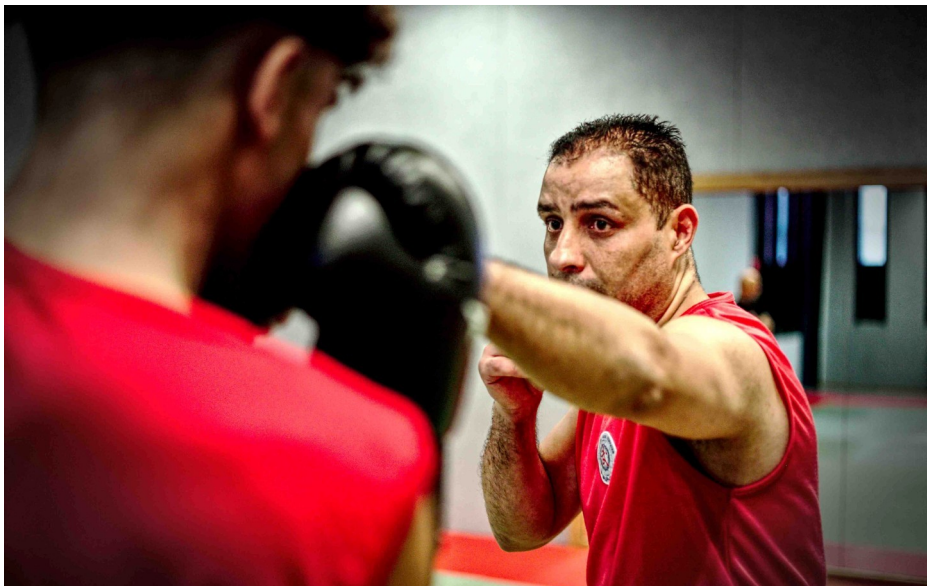
What is Sanda?

Sanda, also known as **Sanshou**, is a dynamic and highly effective Chinese martial art that combines **striking, takedowns, and throws** into a powerful combat system. Originally developed as a **military hand-to-hand combat system**, Sanda has evolved into a competitive sport and a practical self-defense method. Unlike traditional kung fu styles that focus on forms and sequences, Sanda emphasizes **real-world application, agility, and adaptability** in combat.



At its core, Sanda is a blend of **kickboxing techniques**—including punches, kicks, and knee strikes—combined with **wrestling-style takedowns** to dominate opponents both on their feet and on the ground. Fighters are trained to move **fast**, strike **hard**, and control their opponents using precise timing and explosive power.

In modern competition, Sanda is a full-contact sport featured in **international tournaments** and is even used as a foundational skill set by **MMA fighters and self-defense practitioners worldwide**. Whether you're looking to compete, enhance your striking skills, or develop a **complete fighting system**, Sanda offers a practical approach that can benefit fighters of all levels.



Who is This Book For?

This book is designed for anyone interested in **learning and mastering Sanda**, regardless of experience level. Whether you're a **beginner martial artist, an experienced fighter, or simply an enthusiast looking to improve your skills**, this book will provide the **fundamentals, techniques, and training principles** needed to develop a strong foundation in Sanda.

- **Beginners** – If you have no previous martial arts experience, this book will introduce you to **the basics of striking, footwork, and takedowns** in a structured and easy-to-follow format.
- **Martial Artists from Other Styles** – If you practice boxing, Muay Thai, wrestling, or Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu, this guide will help you **integrate Sanda's unique techniques into your existing skill set**.
- **Competitive Fighters** – If you are looking to improve your **speed, agility, and tactical fighting ability**, Sanda's explosive style will give you an edge in **MMA, kickboxing, or self-defense situations**.
- **Fitness Enthusiasts** – If you want a **full-body workout** that improves your strength, endurance, and coordination, training in Sanda will help you build a **powerful and athletic physique** while learning valuable self-defense skills.

This book is structured to **take you step by step** through Sanda's **essential techniques, training drills, and strategies** to help you become a **well-rounded and effective fighter**. Whether you want to **compete, train for self-defense, or improve your martial arts knowledge**, this guide will set you on the path to **mastering Sanda**.

What You Will Learn

This book is designed to provide you with a **step-by-step introduction to Sanda**, covering everything from its **history and principles** to **practical techniques, training drills, fight strategy, and structured training plans**. Here's what you can expect to learn:

1. The History and Principles of Sanda

Understanding the roots of Sanda will help you appreciate its **combat effectiveness and evolution** from a military hand-to-hand system to a competitive sport. You'll learn about:

- How Sanda developed from **traditional Chinese martial arts**
- Why it was refined for **modern combat sports and self-defense**
- The **core principles** of speed, agility, and explosive power

2. Essential Sanda Techniques

Sanda is a complete fighting system that blends **striking and grappling**. You will learn:

- **Punching techniques**: Jab, Cross, Hook, Uppercut

- **Kicking techniques:** Roundhouse Kick, Sidekick, Push Kick
- **Takedowns and Throws:** Sweeps, Grabs, and Counters
- **Defensive techniques:** Evasion, Blocking, and Counterstrikes



3. Practical Training Drills

Drills are essential to building **power, speed, and reaction time**. You will find:

- **Solo drills** to improve striking accuracy and footwork
- **Partner drills** to practice distance control and combinations
- **Mobility exercises** for speed and agility

4. Fight Strategy & Mindset

Whether you train for **competition or self-defense**, having the right **mindset and strategy** is key. This book will teach you:

- **How to outmaneuver opponents** using footwork and tactics
- **How to read your opponent's movements** and react effectively
- **Common mistakes** and how to avoid them in fights

5. Step-by-Step Training Plans

A structured training plan ensures **steady progress**. You will follow:

- A **4-week beginner training plan** to build foundational skills
- **Daily drills** that improve speed, endurance, and technique
- Guidance on **continuing your training beyond this book**

How to Use This Book Effectively

To get the most out of this book, **follow these simple guidelines**:

- ✓ **Start at Your Level** – If you're a beginner, focus on mastering **basic techniques** before moving to advanced drills. Experienced martial artists can **skip to sections that interest them** or integrate Sanda into their existing training.
- ✓ **Practice with a Purpose** – Don't just read—**train!** Apply what you learn in real **drills, sparring, and workouts**. The more you practice, the faster you'll improve.
- ✓ **Use Video Resources** – Some techniques may be easier to understand visually. **Check the provided links** or seek online demonstrations to reinforce your learning.
- ✓ **Train Consistently** – Progress in martial arts comes from **regular practice**. Even short **daily training sessions** will lead to noticeable improvements in your skills over time.
- ✓ **Stay Safe & Listen to Your Body** – Martial arts training should be **challenging but not dangerous**. If you feel pain (not just discomfort), stop and reassess your technique. Safety is always the priority.
- ✓ **Engage with the Community** – The best way to **learn and stay motivated** is by training with others. Find a **training partner, join a Sanda class, or connect with online communities** to share progress and get feedback.

By following these steps, you'll build **strong fundamentals, improve your technique, and develop the skills needed to apply Sanda effectively**.

Chapter 1: What is Sanda?

The Origins of Sanda: Evolution from Traditional Kung Fu and Military Training

Sanda, also known as **Sanshou**, is a modern Chinese martial art that blends **striking, wrestling, and takedowns** into a highly effective combat system. Unlike traditional kung fu styles that emphasize forms and patterns, Sanda was developed as a **real-world combat solution**—rooted in ancient Chinese martial traditions but refined through modern military training.

The origins of Sanda can be traced back to **thousands of years of Chinese martial arts history**. Traditional kung fu styles, such as **Shaolin, Wing Chun, and Bajiquan**, contained powerful strikes and grappling techniques, but they were often taught in structured forms rather than free-flowing combat. Chinese warriors and imperial guards, however, always trained in **practical combat applications**, using strikes, sweeps, and takedowns in battle.

During the **20th century**, the Chinese military recognized the need for a more **practical and adaptable** hand-to-hand combat system. They studied **various kung fu styles**, along with Western boxing, Muay Thai, and wrestling, to develop a combat sport that could be **trained**

effectively for real fights. This led to the creation of **Sanda**—a system that combined the most effective techniques from multiple styles and focused on **full-contact competition and military self-defense.**

By the **1980s**, Sanda had evolved from a **military training program** into an official sport. It became a key discipline in Chinese martial arts competitions, where fighters tested their skills in **full-contact matches** with punches, kicks, and throws. Unlike other striking-based martial arts like boxing or kickboxing, Sanda incorporated **wrestling-style takedowns**, making it one of the most well-rounded combat systems in the world.



Today, Sanda is practiced by **fighters, military personnel, and self-defense practitioners** around the world. Many MMA fighters have integrated **Sanda's explosive striking and takedowns** into their skill set, and it continues to grow as a respected discipline in the martial arts community. Whether used for **sport, self-defense, or military training**, Sanda remains a powerful and effective system that bridges the gap between traditional martial arts and modern combat sports.

In the next section, we'll break down the **core principles of Sanda**, including its emphasis on **speed, agility, and powerful striking techniques.**

Why Sanda is Effective: Combination of Strikes, Throws, and Takedowns

One of the key reasons **Sanda** stands out among martial arts is its **seamless combination of striking and grappling techniques.** Unlike traditional striking-based styles such as boxing or Muay Thai, which focus primarily on punches and kicks, or wrestling and judo, which emphasize throws and takedowns, **Sanda blends both aspects into a single, fluid fighting system.**

This unique **hybrid approach** makes Sanda highly effective in both sport and real-life combat situations. Let's break down why Sanda's combination of **strikes, throws, and takedowns** gives fighters an advantage over opponents from other martial arts backgrounds.

1. Powerful Striking for Stand-Up Fighting

Sanda fighters are trained in **explosive and precise striking**, allowing them to engage at a distance and control exchanges. The striking arsenal includes:

- **Punches:** Fast and powerful combinations of **jabs, crosses, hooks, and uppercuts**
- **Kicks:** Devastating **roundhouse kicks, push kicks, and spinning techniques**
- **Knee Strikes:** Used for both offense and counterattacks.



What makes Sanda's striking unique is its emphasis on **speed, agility, and adaptability**. Fighters are trained to land powerful shots while staying light on their feet, making it difficult for opponents to predict their movements. Unlike Muay Thai, which relies on heavy clinch work, Sanda fighters often use their striking to set up **throws and takedowns** rather than prolonged close-range exchanges.

2. Devastating Throws & Takedowns

What truly sets Sanda apart from other striking-based martial arts is its **integration of wrestling-style throws and takedowns**. A well-executed throw can instantly change the momentum of a fight, either scoring points in competition or neutralizing an opponent in a self-defense situation.

Some of the most common takedown techniques in Sanda include:

- **Sweeps:** Using footwork and timing to off-balance an opponent
- **Hip Throws:** Leveraging body positioning to flip an opponent onto the ground
- **Leg Trips:** Disrupting an opponent's stance and forcing them down

These techniques allow a fighter to control an opponent by **taking them off their feet** and reducing their ability to attack effectively. This element of Sanda makes it highly versatile

against fighters who rely solely on punches and kicks, as they often struggle to defend against sudden throws.



3. Fluid Transitions Between Striking and Grappling

In many martial arts, striking and grappling are treated as separate disciplines. **Sanda eliminates this divide by teaching fighters to switch seamlessly between striking and takedowns.**

For example:

- A fighter might land a few powerful punches, then **use their opponent's reaction to set up a throw.**
- If an opponent defends a takedown attempt, the Sanda fighter can **immediately follow up with a powerful kick or punch.**
- If an opponent closes the distance, the Sanda fighter can **counter with a hip throw or sweep**, putting them in a dominant position.

This ability to **blend striking and grappling** is what makes Sanda such a dangerous and effective fighting system. Unlike traditional styles that focus solely on either **stand-up striking** or **grappling**, Sanda teaches fighters how to **flow between both**, adapting to any situation inside or outside of the ring.

Why This Matters in Competition and Self-Defense

Sanda's effectiveness is not just limited to sport—it also provides a **practical self-defense system**. In a real fight, being able to **strike, evade, throw, and counter** makes Sanda fighters incredibly difficult to handle.

- Against a **boxer**, a Sanda fighter can use kicks and takedowns to neutralize their punches.
- Against a **kickboxer**, Sanda's foot sweeps and takedowns provide an advantage.
- Against a **wrestler or grappler**, Sanda's striking can keep the opponent at a distance, while throws can disrupt their attacks.

This adaptability makes Sanda one of the most **well-rounded** and **realistic** combat sports, useful for both competitive fighting and real-world self-defense situations.

In the next section, we'll dive into the **core principles of Sanda**, focusing on the key skills every fighter needs to develop: **speed, agility, explosive striking, and superior footwork**.

Chapter 2: Core Principles of Sanda

Sanda is not just about throwing punches and kicks—it's about efficiency, adaptability, and control. The key to mastering Sanda lies in its core principles, which define how a fighter moves, attacks, and defends in combat. These principles separate Sanda from other striking-based martial arts and make it an incredibly effective fighting system.

In this chapter, we'll break down the four essential principles of Sanda:

1. **Speed, Agility, and Explosive Striking**
2. **Quick Footwork and Mobility**
3. **Effective Combinations of Punches and Kicks**
4. **Takedown Techniques and Control Strategies**

By understanding and applying these principles, you'll develop the fluid movement, devastating strikes, and strong takedown skills that make Sanda fighters so effective.

1. Speed, Agility, and Explosive Striking

In a real fight, speed and agility are just as important as power. Sanda emphasizes explosive movements, rapid attacks, and constant motion to keep opponents off balance and unable to predict your next move.

Why Speed Matters in Sanda:

- **Faster strikes mean your opponent has less time to react.**
- **Quick movements allow you to attack, evade, and counter without hesitation.**
- **Explosive power helps generate knockout punches and devastating kicks.**

How to Train Speed and Explosive Power:

- ✓ **Shadowboxing with Speed Focus:** Work on throwing quick punches and kicks while moving in different directions.
- ✓ **Plyometric Drills:** Explosive exercises like jump squats, burpees, and sprints help develop fast-twitch muscles.
- ✓ **Pad Work & Heavy Bag Training:** Practice snapping strikes rather than swinging with raw power.

A fast and explosive fighter is dangerous because they strike before their opponent can react. That's why Sanda prioritizes sharp, rapid, and unpredictable attacks over brute strength.

2. Quick Footwork and Mobility

Footwork is the foundation of every great fighter. In Sanda, you're always moving—never standing still. The ability to dart in and out of range, pivot, and angle off to avoid attacks makes Sanda fighters incredibly difficult to hit.

Key Footwork Techniques in Sanda:

- ✓ **Step-and-Slide Movement:** Instead of jumping or hopping, Sanda fighters move by stepping smoothly to maintain balance and speed.
- ✓ **Lateral Movement:** Always circling your opponent rather than staying directly in front of them.
- ✓ **Weight Shifting:** Staying light on your feet and shifting your weight properly before throwing a strike or takedown.

How to Train Footwork & Mobility:

- ✓ **Agility Ladder Drills:** Improve coordination and reaction time.
- ✓ **Cone Drills & Evasion Training:** Practice sidestepping and circling to avoid attacks.
- ✓ **Partner Drills for Distance Control:** Work on stepping just outside an opponent's reach and countering.

A fighter with strong footwork can dictate the pace of the fight—choosing when to attack, when to evade, and how to set up devastating counters.



3. Effective Combinations of Punches and Kicks

Unlike traditional kickboxing, where fighters rely on a single strike or simple combinations, Sanda emphasizes fluid combinations of punches and kicks to keep opponents guessing.

Basic Sanda Striking Combinations:

-  Jab → Cross → Roundhouse Kick
-  Jab → Hook → Sidekick
-  Push Kick → Cross → Sweep
-  Uppercut → Hook → Takedown Setup

Why Sanda Combos Are So Effective:

- ✓ They mix fast and powerful strikes to overwhelm opponents.
- ✓ They transition naturally into takedowns for maximum effectiveness.
- ✓ They keep opponents reacting rather than attacking.

How to Train Sanda Combinations:

- ✓ Pad Work with a Trainer or Partner – Focus on speed, accuracy, and smooth

transitions.

- ✓ Bag Work Drills – Practice throwing different combinations while maintaining movement.

✓ Sparring with an Emphasis on Combinations – Instead of throwing one strike at a time, practice linking attacks together.

A Sanda fighter never throws just one attack—every strike is part of a sequence designed to break an opponent’s defense and set up the next move.

4. Takedown Techniques and Control Strategies

Takedowns are what separate Sanda from other striking martial arts. A well-timed takedown can instantly shift control of the fight, neutralizing an opponent’s striking ability and forcing them to the ground.

Key Sanda Takedown Techniques:

- ✓ Leg Sweeps: Knocking an opponent off balance with foot placement.
- ✓ Hip Throws: Using your body leverage to toss an opponent to the ground.
- ✓ Single-Leg & Double-Leg Takedowns: Quickly closing the distance and taking control.



How to Train Takedown Control:

- ✓ Drilling Against a Partner: Practicing entries and setups for different throws.
- ✓ Defensive Takedown Training: Learning how to counter takedowns and maintain balance.

✓ **Explosive Strength Training:** Developing leg and core power to execute throws efficiently.

By mastering takedowns, you gain a major advantage over pure strikers, who are often unprepared for sudden grappling exchanges. A Sanda fighter knows when to strike and when to throw, keeping their opponents constantly off guard.

Final Thoughts on Sanda's Core Principles

By combining speed, footwork, striking combinations, and takedown strategies, Sanda fighters become highly adaptable and dangerous in any fight. A complete Sanda fighter can:

- ✓ Strike explosively and move fluidly to avoid attacks.
- ✓ Control distance and pace the fight with strong footwork.
- ✓ Chain punches and kicks seamlessly to overwhelm opponents.
- ✓ Use takedowns to break an opponent's rhythm and dominate the fight.

In the next chapter, we'll break down step-by-step instructions for mastering Sanda's most essential striking techniques—including punches, kicks, and takedowns—so you can begin developing your own powerful fighting style.

Chapter 3: Essential Techniques (Step-by-Step Guide)

Sanda is known for its versatile and explosive techniques, blending strikes, kicks, and takedowns into a fluid and dynamic fighting system. In this chapter, we will break down the essential striking techniques, including basic punches, powerful kicks, and effective takedown strategies.

Each technique will be explained step by step, ensuring that you can practice and apply them effectively. Whether you are a beginner learning the fundamentals or an experienced fighter refining your skills, these techniques will help you develop speed, power, and precision in your movements.

6 Sanda Striking Techniques

Basic Punches

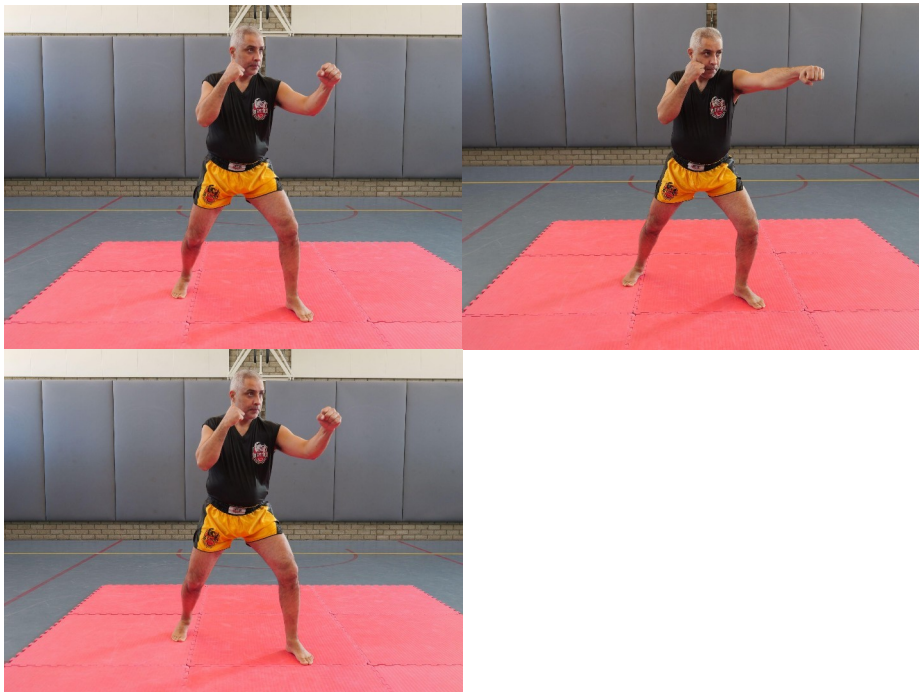
Punching in Sanda follows principles similar to boxing and kickboxing but with an emphasis on speed, efficiency, and combination striking. The goal is to land fast, accurate punches while staying mobile and ready to transition into kicks or takedowns.

1. Jab

The jab is one of the most important punches in Sanda. It is quick, sharp, and used to control distance, disrupt an opponent's attacks, or set up powerful follow-up strikes.

How to Throw a Jab:

1. Start in a fighting stance with your lead foot forward and hands up.
2. Keep your rear hand near your chin for protection.
3. Extend your lead hand straight out, rotating your knuckles downward as you punch.
4. As your fist extends, slightly rotate your lead shoulder forward for extra reach.
5. Immediately snap the punch back to your guard position.



Key Tips:

- ✓ Use your jab to measure distance and disrupt your opponent's rhythm.
 - ✓ Keep it snappy and fast, rather than loading up for power.
 - ✓ Follow up with a cross or kick to make your attacks unpredictable.
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2. Cross (Straight Punch)

The cross is a powerful, straight punch thrown with the rear hand. It is often used as a knockout punch or to create openings for additional attacks.

How to Throw a Cross:

1. Begin in your fighting stance, with your rear hand up.
2. Rotate your hips and shoulders forward as you extend your rear hand straight out.
3. Push off your rear foot, transferring your weight forward for added power.
4. Rotate your knuckles downward as you land the punch.
5. Immediately return your hand to your guard position.



Key Tips:

- ✓ The power comes from hip rotation, not just arm strength.
- ✓ Aim for the chin, nose, or solar plexus for maximum impact.
- ✓ Use the jab to set up the cross, making it harder to defend.

3. Hook

The hook is a devastating punch that can knock an opponent off balance or set up a powerful combination. It is usually thrown to the side of the head or body.

How to Throw a Hook:

1. From your fighting stance, keep your elbow bent at 90 degrees.
2. Rotate your hips and shoulders, pivoting on your lead or rear foot.

3. Keep your punch tight and close to your body, making a short arc.
4. Aim to land the punch with your first two knuckles.
5. Quickly return to your guard position.



Key Tips:

- ✓ Don't wind up—a hook should be fast and compact.
- ✓ Pivot your lead or rear foot to generate power.
- ✓ Use hooks in close-range exchanges or after a jab-cross combo.

4. Uppercut

The uppercut is a close-range punch designed to target the chin or body by coming from below an opponent's guard.

How to Throw an Uppercut:

1. Start in your fighting stance, keeping your knees slightly bent.
2. Drop your rear hand slightly, then drive it upward in a sharp motion.
3. Rotate your hips and shoulders, using your legs to generate power.
4. Keep your punch tight, landing with the first two knuckles.
5. Immediately return to your guard position.



Key Tips:

- ✓ Use the uppercut inside the clinch or after slipping a punch.
- ✓ Don't drop your hand too low—stay compact and explosive.
- ✓ Follow up with a hook or cross to capitalize on the opening.

Powerful Kicks in Sanda

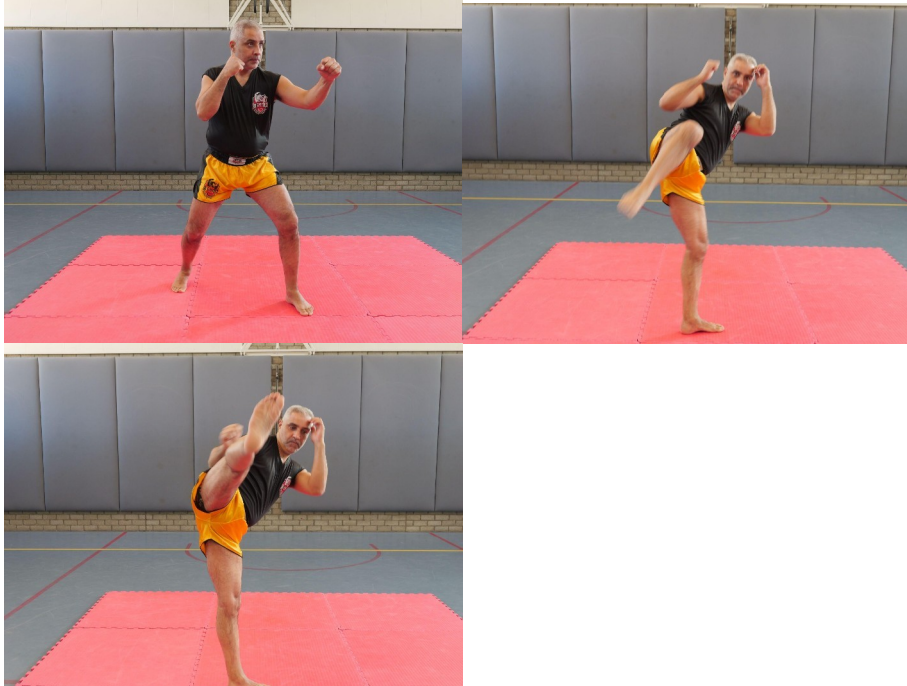
Sanda fighters use a variety of powerful, fast kicks to keep their opponents at a distance, break their guard, or set up takedowns. Here are the three essential Sanda kicks every fighter should master.

1. Roundhouse Kick

The roundhouse kick is one of the most powerful strikes in Sanda, capable of targeting the legs, body, or head.

How to Throw a Roundhouse Kick:

1. Start in your fighting stance, hands up.
2. Pivot on your lead foot, turning your hips and shoulders.
3. Swing your rear leg in a circular motion, striking with the shin or top of the foot.
4. Keep your guard up and maintain balance after the kick.



Key Tips:

- ✓ Aim for ribs, thighs, or head depending on the situation.
- ✓ Pivot fully on your standing foot for maximum power.
- ✓ Recover quickly to avoid counters.

2. Sidekick

The sidekick is a powerful technique used to stop an opponent's advance or create distance.

How to Throw a Sidekick:

1. Start in your fighting stance, shifting your weight to your rear leg.
2. Lift your lead knee up and extend your leg forward.
3. Strike with the heel of your foot, keeping your toes pointed slightly downward.
4. Retract your leg quickly and return to stance.



Key Tips:

- ✓ Sidekicks are great for countering aggressive opponents.
- ✓ Keep your foot flexed and strike with the heel.
- ✓ Follow up with a punch or roundhouse kick after landing.

3. Push Kick (Teep)

The push kick is used for control, defense, and setting up attacks.

How to Throw a Push Kick:

1. Start in your fighting stance, hands up.
2. Lift your lead or rear knee and extend your foot straight forward.
3. Strike with the ball of your foot, pushing your opponent backward.
4. Return to your stance quickly.



Key Tips:

- ✓ Use the push kick to disrupt an opponent's rhythm.
- ✓ Aim for the midsection or thigh to stop forward movement.
- ✓ Follow up with a cross or sidekick.

Final Thoughts on Striking

By combining fast punches, powerful kicks, and smooth transitions, a Sanda fighter becomes incredibly dangerous in striking exchanges. The key to success is:

- ✓ Speed and efficiency—avoid unnecessary movements.
- ✓ Combination attacks—never throw just one strike.
- ✓ Control and balance—always stay ready for the next move.

In the next section, we will dive into Sanda's takedown and counter techniques, teaching you how to sweep, throw, and control your opponent to gain a decisive advantage.

Takedown & Counter Techniques

What makes Sanda different from traditional striking martial arts is its integration of takedowns and counter techniques. A skilled Sanda fighter doesn't just rely on punches and kicks—they also use sweeps, throws, and defensive counters to dominate their opponent.

Mastering these techniques will allow you to disrupt your opponent's balance, control the fight, and capitalize on openings. In this section, we will cover:

- ✓ Sweeps – Tripping and off-balancing your opponent.

- ✓ Throws – Using leverage to take down an opponent.
- ✓ Defense Strategies – Avoiding and countering attacks effectively.

Sweeps

Sweeps are one of the signature takedown techniques in Sanda, used to trip an opponent and take them to the ground. They are especially effective when an opponent is off-balance after missing a strike or overcommitting to an attack.

1. Inside Leg Sweep (Low Sweep)

A fast and effective way to trip an opponent's lead leg and bring them down.

How to Perform an Inside Leg Sweep:

1. Start in your fighting stance, staying light on your feet.
2. When your opponent steps forward or throws a kick, step slightly to the side.
3. Use your lead foot to sweep inside their ankle or shin, while simultaneously pushing their upper body with your hand or shoulder.
4. Follow up with a strike or control the opponent on the ground.

Key Tips:

- ✓ Timing is everything—wait for your opponent to commit to a movement.
- ✓ Keep your sweep low and aim just above the ankle for maximum effectiveness.
- ✓ Combine with punches or kicks for a seamless attack.

2. Outside Leg Sweep

A powerful move to sweep an opponent's rear leg and take them off balance.

How to Perform an Outside Leg Sweep:

1. Start in a fighting stance, facing your opponent.
2. As your opponent moves forward, step diagonally to the outside of their stance.
3. Hook your rear leg around their back leg and sweep it forward while applying pressure to their upper body.
4. Immediately follow up with a strike or prepare for ground control.

Key Tips:

- ✓ Use your whole body—combine your leg sweep with upper body pressure.
- ✓ Work on foot placement—the sweep is most effective when your leg is behind theirs.
- ✓ Don't hesitate—once you commit to the sweep, execute it explosively.

Throws



Throws in Sanda are inspired by Chinese wrestling (Shuai Jiao) and Judo-style takedowns. These techniques allow you to slam an opponent to the ground with control and efficiency.

1. Hip Throw

A powerful takedown that allows you to use your opponent's momentum against them.

How to Perform a Hip Throw:

1. Close the distance and wrap one arm around your opponent's upper body.
2. Step in front of their stance, turning your back slightly toward them.
3. Lower your hips beneath theirs while keeping a strong grip on their upper body.
4. Lift and rotate, using your hips to throw them over your side or shoulder.
5. Follow up with a control position or an immediate strike.

Key Tips:

- ✓ Use your hips, not your arms—the power comes from proper positioning.
- ✓ Explode into the throw—once your opponent's weight is shifted, commit fully.
- ✓ Stay balanced—avoid getting countered by keeping your base strong.

2. Shoulder Throw (Over-the-Shoulder Takedown)

A fast and efficient way to take down an aggressive opponent.

How to Perform a Shoulder Throw:

1. Step into your opponent, grabbing their lead arm and shoulder.
2. Turn your back toward them, getting low beneath their center of gravity.
3. Use your shoulder and hip as leverage, pulling them forward.
4. Rotate your body and throw them over your shoulder.
5. Follow up immediately with ground control or a finishing strike.



Key Tips:

- ✓ Perfect for countering aggressive opponents who rush forward.
- ✓ Keep a strong grip to ensure full control during the throw.
- ✓ Land in a dominant position to maintain the advantage.

Defense Strategies

A great fighter doesn't just attack—they also know how to defend and counter effectively. Sanda teaches a mix of evasive footwork, parries, and counterattacks to minimize damage while setting up offensive opportunities.

1. Evasion and Footwork

Instead of blocking every attack, Sanda fighters use movement and angles to avoid getting hit.

- ✓ **Side Steps & Angles:** Instead of retreating, move to the side to create a better counterattack position.
- ✓ **Pivoting:** Rotate on your lead foot to change directions and evade incoming strikes.
- ✓ **Jump-back Defense:** A quick hop backward can help evade kicks and lunging punches.



2. Parrying and Deflecting Attacks

Parrying is a more energy-efficient defense than blocking—instead of absorbing force, you redirect it.

- ✓ **Jab Defense:** Slightly tap your opponent's jab to the side while maintaining your guard.
- ✓ **Kick Deflection:** Use your shin or forearm to redirect incoming kicks rather than taking them head-on.
- ✓ **Slipping Punches:** Move your head just enough to make your opponent miss, then counter with a strike.

3. Catching and Countering Kicks

One of the most effective counters in Sanda is catching an opponent's kick and immediately countering with a takedown or strike.



How to Catch and Counter a Kick:

1. As your opponent throws a roundhouse or push kick, step slightly back or to the side.
2. Catch their leg with both hands, securing control.
3. Use their momentum to pull them off balance and follow up with:
 - ① A sweep to trip them.
 - ① A straight punch to the head.
 - ① A throw to the ground for full control.



Key Tips:

- ✓ Timing is crucial—catch the kick as soon as it extends.
- ✓ Move quickly—a slow reaction will allow your opponent to escape.
- ✓ Follow up immediately—don't just catch; attack right away.

Final Thoughts on Sanda Techniques

Mastering Sanda's striking, takedowns, and defensive techniques will make you a well-rounded fighter. Whether you're training for competition, self-defense, or general martial arts knowledge, these techniques give you the tools to adapt to any fight.

- ✓ Use fast and powerful punches to create openings.
- ✓ Combine kicks and strikes for unpredictable attacks.
- ✓ Integrate sweeps and throws to take full control.
- ✓ Defend and counter with precision to stay ahead.

In the next chapter, we'll cover practical training drills, where you'll learn how to sharpen these techniques through solo and partner exercises, building the speed, power, and reflexes needed to apply Sanda effectively in combat.

Chapter 4: Practical Training Drills

Training in Sanda is not just about learning techniques—it's about refining them through practice. The key to becoming a skilled fighter is drilling consistently, focusing on speed, accuracy, power, and balance.

In this chapter, we will cover essential solo training drills that will help you improve your striking, footwork, and overall combat efficiency. These exercises are designed to be performed without a partner, making them perfect for individual training at home or in the gym.

The Importance of Solo Drills

Practicing alone allows you to:

- ✓ Develop muscle memory for strikes and movement.
- ✓ Improve footwork and mobility for better positioning in fights.

- ✓ Increase power and speed through repetitive training.
- ✓ Refine technique without the pressure of sparring.

The three most essential solo Sanda drills include:

1. Shadowboxing – Developing speed, precision, and fight strategy.
2. Power Striking – Building knockout power in punches and kicks.
3. Balance Training – Enhancing stability for better footwork and takedown defense.

Let's break each one down.

1. Shadowboxing: The Foundation of Solo Training

Shadowboxing is one of the most effective solo drills a fighter can do. It allows you to simulate real combat, sharpen your technique, and develop fluid movement without needing a partner.

How to Shadowbox Effectively

1. Get into your fighting stance – Feet shoulder-width apart, hands up, knees slightly bent.
2. Move around naturally – Use light footwork, circling, stepping in and out, and pivoting.
3. Throw combinations – Mix jabs, crosses, hooks, and uppercuts with kicks and takedown setups.
4. Visualize an opponent – Imagine countering and evading attacks as you move.
5. Maintain a high pace – Work for 2 to 3-minute rounds with short rest periods.

Shadowboxing Variations

- ◆ Speed Focus – Throw fast, precise strikes while staying light on your feet.
- ◆ Power Focus – Focus on throwing each punch or kick with full force.
- ◆ Defense & Evasion – Work on head movement, blocks, and counterattacks.

Key Tips for Shadowboxing:

- ✓ Always keep your hands up—don't drop your guard.
- ✓ Visualize real fight situations to make the drill effective.
- ✓ Stay light and relaxed, avoiding unnecessary tension.
- ✓ Use a mirror to check form and technique.

Shadowboxing is a must-do daily drill for all Sanda fighters. Just 10–15 minutes a day will dramatically improve your coordination, timing, and striking technique.

2. Power Striking: Building Explosive Punches and Kicks

While speed and precision are critical in Sanda, a powerful strike can end a fight in seconds. Power striking drills focus on generating maximum force behind every punch and kick.

Power Punching Drills

1. Heavy Bag Work

- Perform 3-minute rounds of nonstop punching, focusing on full extension and hip rotation.
- Alternate between fast, high-volume punches and explosive power shots.
- Keep your stance stable and strong—don't lose balance when hitting hard.

2. Plyometric Punch Training

- Use medicine ball throws to train explosive power in your punches.
- Perform clap push-ups to build upper-body explosiveness.

3. Resistance Band Training

- Attach resistance bands to your gloves and throw fast punches against resistance.
- This strengthens the shoulders and core, improving endurance and power.

Power Kicking Drills

1. Heavy Bag Kicking

- Throw 100 kicks per leg, focusing on full power.

While solo drills build technique, speed, and power, partner drills develop your timing, accuracy, and real-world fight adaptability. Training with a partner allows you to:

- ✓ Test your techniques in live situations
- ✓ Develop fight IQ through real-time adjustments
- ✓ Improve defensive reflexes and counters
- ✓ Sharpen timing and distance management

The three essential partner drills in Sanda include:

1. **Controlled Sparring** – Learning to apply techniques in a realistic setting.
2. **Distance Management** Rotate the hips fully for maximum impact.
3. **Work on different kicks** (roundhouse, sidekick, push kick) to develop all-around strength.

2. Leg Strength Drills

- Jump squats, lunges, and explosive step-ups help build leg power for stronger kicks.
- Resistance band kicks—attach bands to your ankles and throw fast, controlled kicks to build speed and power.

Key Tips for Power Striking:

- ✓ Engage the whole body—power comes from the legs, hips, and core, not just the arms.
- ✓ Focus on form first—don't sacrifice technique for power.
- ✓ Hit with intent—train as if you're in a real fight.

Regular power striking training will make your attacks more dangerous, more efficient, and harder to block.

In the next section, we'll cover balance training, a critical component of Sanda that helps fighters maintain stability, defend against takedowns, and execute clean striking techniques.

Chapter 4: Practical Training Drills (Continued)

Partner Drills: Sharpening Your Combat Skills

4. – Understanding how to control range effectively.
5. Reaction Training – Developing fast reflexes for offense and defense.

Let's break each one down in detail.




1. Controlled Sparring

Sparring is one of the most effective ways to develop your fighting ability, but in Sanda, it must be structured and controlled to ensure skill development and safety. Unlike full-contact fighting, controlled sparring allows you to test techniques without risking injury.




How to Conduct Controlled Sparring:

1. Set Specific Goals – Focus on one area at a time (e.g., striking only, takedown setups, defensive counters).
2. Go at 50-70% Power – The goal is to improve timing and technique, not to knock out your partner.
3. Rotate Partners – Training with different partners improves adaptability to different styles.
4. Use Protective Gear – Gloves, shin guards, and mouthguards keep sparring safe and productive.

Types of Controlled Sparring:

-  **Technical Sparring** – Light contact, focusing on precision and movement.
-  **Defensive Sparring** – One partner attacks while the other focuses solely on defense.
-  **Situational Sparring** – Starting from specific scenarios (e.g., close-range exchanges, against a push kick, etc.).

Key Tips for Controlled Sparring:

-  **Keep your movements fluid and natural—don't tense up.**
-  **Focus on setting up techniques rather than brute force.**
-  **Stay disciplined—sparring is about learning, not winning.**

Practicing controlled sparring several times per week will improve your real-world fight readiness while refining your techniques in a low-risk environment.

2. Distance Management

Distance is one of the most important aspects of striking-based martial arts. Knowing when to step in, step out, and maintain control of space determines whether you land or avoid attacks.

Sanda emphasizes quick footwork and distance control, allowing fighters to:

- ✓ Stay just outside an opponent's reach while being close enough to counter.
- ✓ Close the gap quickly for strikes or takedowns.
- ✓ Prevent getting trapped or overwhelmed in exchanges.

Partner Drill for Distance Control:

Step-in, Step-out Drill

1. Partner A stands in a fighting stance, while Partner B throws a controlled jab or push kick.
2. Partner A steps just out of range without overcommitting.
3. As soon as the attack misses, Partner A steps back in and counters with a strike.
4. Repeat this drill for 3-minute rounds, switching roles each time.

Lateral Movement Drill

1. Both partners start in a fighting stance.
2. One partner moves forward, while the other circles around instead of retreating backward.
3. Partners reset positions and repeat.
4. This drill teaches fighters how to avoid getting trapped while staying in position to strike.

Key Tips for Distance Management:

- ✓ Don't back up in a straight line—move laterally to create angles.
- ✓ Stay balanced—don't overextend when attacking or defending.
- ✓ Time your counters—capitalize on missed attacks immediately.

By practicing distance control drills regularly, fighters develop the ability to dictate the pace of a fight and avoid unnecessary damage.

3. Reaction Training

A fighter with fast reflexes can see an attack coming and react instantly, whether to evade, block, or counterattack. Reaction training is crucial in Sanda because it sharpens reflexes for both offense and defense.

Partner Reaction Drill #1: Feint and Counter

- ✓ Partner A throws feints (fake strikes or kicks) while Partner B reacts.
 - ✓ Partner B must quickly identify real vs. fake attacks and respond accordingly.
 - ✓ Switch roles every 2 minutes and repeat for multiple rounds.
- ◆ Goal: Improve the ability to recognize an opponent's attack patterns and not fall for feints.

Partner Reaction Drill #2: Call-and-React Drill

- ✓ Partner A calls out an attack (e.g., “jab-cross,” “roundhouse kick,” or “sweep”).
 - ✓ Partner B must immediately react and defend the attack correctly.
 - ✓ Both partners take turns calling and responding, keeping the drill unpredictable.
- ◆ Goal: Train the brain to react without hesitation and improve instinctive movement.

Partner Reaction Drill #3: Light Contact Reflex Training

- ✓ Partner A throws slow, light strikes while Partner B defends using movement or blocks.
 - ✓ Gradually increase speed as Partner B improves reaction time.
 - ✓ Keep the drill fluid—no hard strikes, just a natural flow of attack and defense.
- ◆ Goal: Develop reflexive blocking, slipping, and countering in a low-pressure environment.

Key Tips for Reaction Training:

- ✓ Stay relaxed and fluid—tension slows down reactions.
- ✓ Keep your eyes on your opponent's shoulders and hips, not just their hands.
- ✓ Don't overthink—react naturally to incoming attacks.

Consistent reaction training makes a fighter sharper, faster, and harder to hit, leading to better performance in sparring and real fights.

Final Thoughts on Partner Drills

Training with a partner accelerates your improvement by allowing you to apply techniques in a realistic setting.

- ✓ Controlled Sparring builds fight experience while keeping you safe.
- ✓ Distance Management helps you control range and avoid unnecessary damage.
- ✓ Reaction Training sharpens your reflexes and instinctive defense.

By incorporating these drills regularly, you'll develop the ability to read, react, and adapt in any fight situation.

In the next section, we'll focus on footwork and mobility exercises, ensuring that you can move fluidly, explosively, and efficiently in any combat scenario.

Chapter 4: Practical Training Drills (Continued)

Footwork & Mobility Exercises

In Sanda, footwork is everything. A fighter with great footwork can:

- ✓ Control the distance in a fight.
- ✓ Avoid getting trapped or hit by an opponent.
- ✓ Set up powerful attacks and takedowns with ease.
- ✓ Move quickly in and out of range to attack or evade.

In this section, we will focus on agility drills and evasion techniques, two essential elements of Sanda footwork that will help you become a faster, more elusive fighter.

Agility Drills: Improving Speed & Movement

A fighter's agility determines how well they can move in a fast-paced fight. These drills will develop your reaction time, explosive speed, and directional changes.

1. Ladder Drills for Foot Speed

Ladder drills improve coordination, speed, and balance, allowing fighters to move quickly in any direction.

How to Perform the Ladder Drill:

1. Set up an agility ladder or draw one on the ground.
2. Start in your fighting stance, staying light on your feet.
3. Step quickly through the ladder using various footwork patterns:
 - ◆ One foot per square – Focus on speed.

- ◆ Two feet per square – Improves coordination.
 - ◆ Lateral movement – Enhances side-stepping ability.
4. Perform each variation for 30–60 seconds, resting between rounds.

Key Tips:

- ✓ Keep your knees slightly bent and stay on the balls of your feet.
- ✓ Maintain a high guard to reinforce defensive habits.
- ✓ Increase speed gradually—accuracy first, then speed.

2. Cone Drills for Directional Changes

Changing direction without losing balance is crucial in Sanda. Cone drills help fighters cut angles, evade attacks, and reposition quickly.

How to Perform Cone Drills:

1. Place four to six cones in a diamond or zig-zag pattern.
2. Start in a fighting stance, facing forward.
3. Move between the cones using quick lateral and diagonal steps.
4. Practice:
 - ◆ Forward and backward movement – Enter and exit attack range.
 - ◆ Side-to-side evasion – Learn to circle opponents.
 - ◆ Explosive direction changes – Shift weight smoothly without stopping.

Key Tips:

- ✓ Keep your feet shoulder-width apart to avoid crossing your legs.
- ✓ Stay low and balanced—don't stand up too tall.
- ✓ Use a mix of quick steps and controlled pivots to maintain control.

3. Pivot Drills for Angle Control

A great Sanda fighter never stands directly in front of an opponent—they create angles to land attacks and evade counters. Pivot drills teach you how to sidestep and reposition instantly.

How to Perform Pivot Drills:

1. Stand in your fighting stance, with weight evenly distributed.
2. Step out to the side while keeping one foot planted.
3. Pivot 45 to 90 degrees, facing a new direction.
4. Throw a jab or cross immediately after pivoting to reinforce the habit.

Key Tips:

- ✓ Pivot off your lead foot to cut angles effectively.
- ✓ Keep movements tight and controlled—avoid wide turns.
- ✓ Combine pivots with strikes to make footwork more fight-realistic.

Practicing these agility drills will make you a faster, harder-to-hit fighter with superior mobility.

Evasion Techniques: Avoiding Strikes with Footwork

Sanda fighters don't just block strikes—they evade them entirely. A well-timed evasion allows you to avoid damage while setting up counterattacks.

1. Back Step & Counter

One of the simplest evasions in Sanda is stepping just outside an opponent's attack range and immediately countering.

How to Perform the Back Step & Counter:

1. Stand in your fighting stance, hands up.
2. As your opponent throws a punch or kick, take a quick step backward.
3. The moment their attack misses, step forward and counter with a jab or cross.

Key Tips:

- ✓ Keep your step small and controlled—don't retreat too far.
- ✓ Stay ready to counter—don't just evade, attack immediately.
- ✓ Use this against aggressive opponents who overcommit to attacks.

2. Side Step & Angle Off

A straight attack (like a jab or push kick) is easiest to evade by stepping off to the side and repositioning for a counter.

How to Perform the Side Step & Angle Off:

1. As your opponent throws a straight punch or kick, take a quick step diagonally to the side.
2. Keep your eyes on them and stay in a fighting stance.
3. Follow up with a counterattack (a hook, uppercut, or sweep).

Key Tips:

- ✓ Always angle off instead of just moving straight back.
- ✓ Stay low and balanced to avoid tripping or exposing yourself.
- ✓ Use pivots and lateral steps together for smoother movement.

3. Ducking & Slipping

Instead of blocking every punch, ducking and slipping allow you to stay in range for counters without absorbing damage.

How to Perform Ducking & Slipping:

1. To duck, bend your knees slightly and lower your head just enough to avoid the punch.
2. To slip, rotate your shoulders and lean just outside the incoming strike.
3. After evading, return to a neutral stance and counter immediately.

Key Tips:

- ✓ Keep your movements small and efficient—don't overcommit.
- ✓ Always come back up in a strong stance ready to attack.
- ✓ Combine ducking and slipping with footwork and counterpunching.

Final Thoughts on Footwork & Mobility

Good footwork is the difference between an average fighter and an elite one. It allows you to:

- ✓ Control the fight by dictating range and angles.
- ✓ Avoid unnecessary damage by staying elusive.
- ✓ Set up attacks and counters with smooth positioning.

By incorporating agility drills and evasion techniques into your training, you will become a faster, more balanced, and harder-to-hit fighter.

In the next chapter, we will cover mindset and strategy, where you'll learn the mental side of Sanda—how to stay composed, strategize in a fight, and avoid common mistakes that hold fighters back.

Chapter 5: Defensive Techniques & Counters

Defense is just as important as offense in Sanda. A fighter who can evade, counter, and control their opponent's attacks will always have the upper hand. One of the most common and effective strikes in Sanda is the push kick (also known as the front kick or "teep"). It is used to:

- ✓ Disrupt an opponent's balance
- ✓ Control distance and prevent aggression
- ✓ Set up follow-up attacks like punches or sweeps

While the push kick is a powerful tool, it also leaves the attacker temporarily vulnerable. If you learn how to evade and counter correctly, you can turn an opponent's attack into an opportunity to strike back or take them down.

Evading and Countering the Push Kick (Detailed Techniques)

1. Basic Evasion: Stepping Out of the Kick's Range

The simplest way to defend against a push kick is to avoid it entirely. If your opponent misses, they are left off-balance for a moment, giving you a chance to counterattack immediately.

How to Evade a Push Kick by Stepping Back:

1. Stand in your fighting stance, watching your opponent's movements.
2. As soon as you see them lift their knee for a push kick, step back quickly with your rear leg.
3. Keep your stance balanced—don't lean too far backward, or you'll be unable to counter.
4. Once their kick misses, immediately step forward and counter with a low kick, jab, or takedown setup.

Key Tips:

- ✔ Read your opponent's body language—a raised knee is the first sign of an incoming kick.
- ✔ React fast but stay in control—don't step too far back, or you'll lose your own attacking position.
- ✔ Be ready to counter—don't just evade; use their missed kick to set up your next move.

◆ **When to Use This:** Against opponents who rely heavily on push kicks to control distance.

2. Evade & Counter with a Punch: Jab or Cross

A more advanced way to counter a push kick is by evading slightly and striking back immediately with a punch. This allows you to interrupt their attack and put pressure on them before they can recover.

How to Evade & Counter with a Jab:

1. As your opponent lifts their leg for a push kick, step slightly to the side instead of stepping backward.
2. Keep your lead hand up to protect yourself.
3. As their foot extends forward, throw a fast jab straight to their face before they regain balance.
4. Follow up with a cross, hook, or even a takedown.

Key Tips:

- ✔ Time your jab as their kick reaches full extension—this is when they are most off-balance.
- ✔ Use a quick step to the side—not just back, so you stay in range for the counter.
- ✔ Follow up immediately—don't stop after one punch; chain it into a combination.

How to Evade & Counter with a Cross:

1. Step slightly outside the kick's path, just enough to avoid direct impact.

2. As their foot extends, rotate your hips and throw a powerful cross straight to their head or body.
3. Keep your rear hand high for protection in case they recover quickly.
4. If they stumble from the impact, follow up with low kicks, hooks, or a sweep.

Key Tips:

- ✓ The cross is stronger than the jab but requires better timing.
- ✓ Use head movement to slip slightly outside the kick's path before throwing the counter.
- ✓ This works best against slower push kicks where you can see the movement early.

◆ **When to Use This:** When facing opponents who use push kicks without quickly retracting their leg, giving you time to strike.

Why This Counter Works

- ✓ Most fighters don't expect a counter punch while throwing a push kick.
- ✓ A well-timed punch will disrupt their balance, preventing them from throwing another attack.
- ✓ It forces your opponent to hesitate before using push kicks again, giving you control over the fight.

By mastering evasion and counterpunching, you can turn an opponent's offensive push kick into your advantage, creating opportunities to strike back effectively.

In the next section, we'll cover more advanced counters, including how to catch a push kick and turn it into a sweep or throw, completely neutralizing your opponent.

Chapter 5: Defensive Techniques & Counters (Continued)

Evading and Countering the Push Kick (Advanced Techniques)

In the previous section, we covered how to evade and counter with punches. Now, we'll take it a step further by learning how to catch the kick, sweep the opponent off balance, or throw them to the ground. These techniques are especially effective in Sanda, where sweeps and throws are legal and can score highly in competition—or neutralize an opponent in self-defense.

1. Evade & Grab the Kick: Holding the Leg and Striking

Instead of simply stepping away from a push kick, an advanced counter is to catch the leg and strike immediately. This disrupts your opponent's balance and leaves them vulnerable to follow-up attacks.

How to Evade & Grab the Push Kick:

1. As your opponent throws a push kick, step slightly to the side while keeping your guard up.
2. Instead of fully backing away, use your rear hand to scoop under their kicking leg, grabbing just below the knee.
3. Keep their leg trapped against your side to control their movement.
4. Immediately strike with your free hand, delivering a jab or cross to the face, or a hook to the ribs.
5. After striking, you can either push their leg to make them stumble or transition into a takedown.

Key Tips:

- ✓ Stay balanced—don't lean too far forward when grabbing the kick.
- ✓ Move your head slightly to the side to avoid getting hit by their knee.
- ✓ Strike immediately after grabbing the leg—don't give them time to react.

◆ **When to Use This:** Against opponents who throw lazy or predictable push kicks without quickly retracting their leg.

2. Evade & Sweep: Taking the Opponent Off Balance

Once you catch a push kick, you can use their extended leg against them by executing a sweep, knocking them to the ground.

How to Evade & Sweep the Opponent:

1. Step diagonally to the side as your opponent throws a push kick.
2. Catch their leg with your rear hand, securing control.
3. At the same time, step forward and slightly to the side with your rear foot, closing the distance.
4. Use your lead leg to sweep their standing leg in a circular motion, knocking them off balance.
5. Push forward slightly with your upper body to complete the takedown.

Key Tips:

- ✓ Sweep low, just above their ankle—this makes it harder for them to maintain balance.
- ✓ Pull their leg slightly toward you before sweeping—this forces them onto one foot.
- ✓ Follow up immediately—once they hit the ground, be ready to control the fight.

◆ **When to Use This:** When your opponent commits too much weight forward in their push kick, making them unstable.

3. Evade & Throw: Lifting and Dumping the Opponent

For a more dominant counter, instead of sweeping their leg, you can lift and throw them to the ground, leaving them completely exposed.

How to Evade & Execute the Throw:

1. Step slightly off-center as the opponent throws their push kick.
2. Catch the kick with both hands—one under their knee, one higher on their shin.
3. Instead of sweeping, step forward and lift their leg high, forcing their balance to shift.
4. As they struggle to maintain balance, turn your body and use your hips to dump them onto the ground.
5. Follow up with a controlled strike or position yourself for further attack.

Key Tips:

- ✔ Use your whole body—don't just rely on your arms to lift their leg.
- ✔ Aim to turn their upper body slightly—this makes the throw more effective.
- ✔ Execute quickly—once you catch the kick, move immediately before they regain balance.

◆ **When to Use This:** Against opponents who overextend their push kicks, leaving themselves off-balance and vulnerable.

Final Thoughts on Advanced Counters

Mastering these advanced defensive techniques allows you to neutralize and punish opponents who rely on push kicks. Whether you grab and strike, sweep them off their feet, or throw them down, each counter gives you a clear advantage in a fight.

- ✓ Catching and striking allows you to counterattack without losing position.
- ✓ Sweeping their leg forces them to the ground, giving you full control.
- ✓ Lifting and dumping them creates a dominant position where they must recover before continuing.

In the next section, we will cover defensive strategies against other attacks, including how to evade and counter roundhouse kicks and aggressive striking combinations.

Chapter 5: Defensive Techniques & Counters (Continued)

In this section, we will focus on two highly effective counters to an opponent's push kick:

1. **Evade & Side Kick Counter** – A fast, offensive response that turns an opponent's attack into an immediate strike.

2. **Evade & Shoulder Throw** – A powerful takedown that shifts the momentum in your favor, putting your opponent on the ground.

Both of these techniques allow you to stay in control of the fight, punishing your opponent for their aggressive movements while positioning yourself for a follow-up attack.

1. Evade & Side Kick Counter: Using an Immediate Offensive Strike

The sidekick counter is an aggressive way to respond to a push kick. Instead of just defending, this move allows you to turn defense into offense by delivering a powerful sidekick to your opponent's midsection as they retract their leg.

How to Evade & Counter with a Side Kick:

1. As your opponent lifts their leg to throw a push kick, step slightly diagonally backward to evade the strike.
2. The moment their foot starts to retract, shift your weight onto your rear leg and prepare to strike.
3. Lift your lead leg, chambering your knee up.
4. Extend your leg explosively, driving your heel into their midsection, ribs, or hip.
5. Snap your kick back and return to a strong fighting stance, ready for follow-ups.

Key Tips:

- ✓ Time your counter perfectly—throw the side kick right as their leg starts retracting, when they are least stable.
- ✓ Strike with your heel, not your toes, to generate the most impact.
- ✓ Stay balanced—avoid leaning back too much when throwing the kick.
- ✓ Follow up immediately—after landing the kick, be ready to step in with a punch or execute a takedown.

◆ **When to Use This:** Against opponents who repeatedly use push kicks without quick recovery.

This counter works because a well-timed side kick is extremely difficult to block, and it forces your opponent backward, giving you control over the fight.

2. Evade & Shoulder Throw: Executing an Over-the-Shoulder Takedown

The shoulder throw (Seoi Nage) is an advanced but highly effective way to counter a push kick. Instead of just evading or striking back, you use their own momentum against them—grabbing their leg, pulling them forward, and throwing them over your shoulder.

How to Evade & Execute the Shoulder Throw:

1. Step slightly to the side as your opponent throws a push kick.
2. Catch their leg with both hands—one hand gripping behind their knee, the other on their shin.
3. Step in deep with your rear foot, placing yourself under their center of gravity.
4. Turn your back slightly to them while pulling their leg upward.
5. Drop your weight and roll them over your shoulder, using your hip as leverage.
6. As they land, maintain control by following up with a dominant position or an immediate strike.

Key Tips:

- ✓ Drop your weight low as you execute the throw—this makes it easier to lift your opponent.
- ✓ Keep your grip strong—if they break free mid-throw, you could lose position.
- ✓ Follow through completely—don't stop halfway; commit to throwing them fully.
- ✓ Stay ready to attack or control them on the ground.

◆ **When to Use This:** Against aggressive opponents who overcommit to their push kicks, especially if they lean forward while kicking.

This throw is incredibly effective because:

- ✓ It completely neutralizes your opponent's offense, forcing them to reset.
- ✓ It disorients them, leaving them vulnerable after hitting the ground.
- ✓ It establishes dominance, especially in a self-defense situation or a competition setting.

Final Thoughts on These Counters

Both the side kick counter and shoulder throw turn an opponent's attack into an opportunity to take control of the fight.

- ✓ The Side Kick Counter is perfect for maintaining distance and inflicting damage immediately.
- ✓ The Shoulder Throw is a more advanced but devastating technique that completely removes your opponent's ability to continue attacking.

Mastering these counters will make you a well-rounded fighter, able to respond aggressively and tactically to any opponent.

In the next section, we'll explore more advanced countering options, including how to turn a caught push kick into a sweep or a full control takedown.

Chapter 6: Mindset & Strategy for Fighting & Competition

Sanda is not just about technique—it's also about mindset and strategy. A fighter with strong technical skills but a weak mental game will struggle under pressure, while a

fighter who understands strategy can overcome stronger, faster, and more skilled opponents through intelligence and composure.

In this chapter, we'll cover:

1. **Building a Fighter's Mindset – Developing mental toughness and confidence.**
2. **Strategy for Sparring & Competition – Understanding how to fight smart, not just hard.**
3. **Common Mistakes & How to Fix Them – Avoiding errors that can cost you a match or leave you vulnerable in a fight.**

By mastering these elements, you will not only improve your performance but also gain an edge over opponents who focus solely on physical training.

1. Building a Fighter's Mindset

The right mindset is the foundation of a great fighter. It allows you to stay calm under pressure, adapt to different opponents, and push through exhaustion.

Key Elements of a Strong Fighter's Mindset

- ✔ **Confidence Without Ego – Believe in your skills, but always stay open to learning. Overconfidence leads to underestimating opponents, while self-doubt prevents you from performing at your best.**
- ✔ **Composure Under Pressure – Fighting isn't just about offense; it's about staying calm when things don't go your way. Train your ability to stay relaxed, breathe, and adjust your strategy mid-fight.**
- ✔ **Controlled Aggression – The best fighters don't just attack wildly; they use aggression strategically to apply pressure, break their opponent's rhythm, and capitalize on openings.**
- ✔ **Adaptability – No two opponents are the same. Learn to read your opponent's tendencies quickly and adjust your game plan as needed.**
- ✔ **Mental Endurance – Fatigue is the enemy of all fighters. Those who can push through exhaustion while maintaining technique and composure will outlast their opponents.**

Training the Fighter's Mindset

💡 **Visualization Drills – Before training or competing, visualize yourself executing techniques with precision. Picture different fight scenarios and imagine yourself handling them with skill and confidence.**

💡 **Breath Control Under Stress – During sparring, focus on controlling your breathing. The more relaxed and measured your breaths are, the more oxygen your body receives, allowing you to stay sharp.**

💡 **Fight Smart, Not Just Hard** – Instead of brute force, focus on efficiency, precision, and energy conservation. Think of your movements like a chess game—every move should serve a purpose.

A strong fighter's mindset will carry you through the toughest fights, even when skill and strength are equal.

2. Strategy for Sparring & Competition

A well-trained fighter doesn't just throw punches and kicks at random—they enter a fight with a game plan. Whether you are sparring in the gym or competing in a tournament, strategy is key to winning fights.

Fundamental Fight Strategies in Sanda

- ✓ **Control the Distance** – Distance dictates the fight. If you're a better striker, keep opponents at range with kicks. If you excel at takedowns, close the distance and get inside their guard.
- ✓ **Attack in Combinations** – Don't rely on single strikes. Sanda is all about fluid combinations—string together punches, kicks, and sweeps to overwhelm your opponent.
- ✓ **Bait & Counter** – Use feints to lure your opponent into attacking, then capitalize on their reaction with a well-timed counter.
- ✓ **Manage Your Energy** – Explode at the right moments, but don't waste energy on unnecessary movements. A tired fighter is a vulnerable fighter.
- ✓ **Read Your Opponent** – Pay attention to patterns in their attacks. If they keep using the same technique, set a trap and counter accordingly.
- ✓ **Stay Unpredictable** – If you repeat the same combinations too often, your opponent will adapt. Keep mixing up your attacks, angles, and timing to stay ahead.

Advanced Fight Tactics for Sanda Competitions

- ◆ **Lead with the Jab or Push Kick** – These are safe, efficient strikes to measure distance, disrupt rhythm, and set up bigger attacks.
- ◆ **Use Footwork to Angle Off** – Instead of moving straight back under pressure, pivot and sidestep to create new angles for attack.
- ◆ **Force Your Opponent to React** – Apply constant pressure, making them move on your terms rather than theirs.
- ◆ **Switch Up Your Attack Levels** – Mix up head, body, and leg attacks to keep them guessing. Example: Jab to the head → Hook to the body → Low kick to the leg.
- ◆ **Strike and Exit Quickly** – Hit your opponent, then move before they can counter—this is especially useful against aggressive fighters.

By applying these strategic elements, you'll fight smarter, conserve energy, and gain the advantage over opponents who rely purely on aggression.

3. Common Mistakes & How to Fix Them

Even experienced fighters make mistakes, but the key is to recognize and correct them quickly. Below are some of the most common mistakes in Sanda and how to fix them.

Mistake #1: Standing Too Still

✗ **Problem:** A stationary fighter is an easy target. If you don't move, your opponent will dictate the fight.

✓ **Solution:** Always stay light on your feet, constantly adjusting your position and angle. Practice agility drills to improve movement.

Mistake #2: Relying Only on Offense

✗ **Problem:** Some fighters focus only on attacking and forget about defense. This makes them predictable and vulnerable to counters.

✓ **Solution:** Balance your offense with head movement, footwork, and counters. Use controlled sparring to practice attacking while staying defensively aware.

Mistake #3: Throwing Single Strikes

✗ **Problem:** Many beginners throw one punch or kick at a time, which is easy to block.

✓ **Solution:** Always attack in combinations. Even if your first strike is blocked, the second or third can land. Drill 3-5 strike combinations regularly.

Mistake #4: Telegraphing Attacks

✗ **Problem:** If you wind up before a punch or kick, your opponent will see it coming and counter.

✓ **Solution:** Keep your movements tight and explosive. Train to strike without unnecessary movement—shadowboxing helps improve this.

Mistake #5: Ignoring Takedown Defense

✗ **Problem:** Strikers often forget that Sanda allows throws and sweeps, leaving them vulnerable.

✓ **Solution:** Learn to defend takedowns by sprawling, pivoting, or countering with a strike. Practice partner drills focusing on takedown defense.

Final Thoughts on Mindset & Strategy

✓ A fighter's mindset is just as important as physical skill. Confidence, composure, and adaptability will set you apart.

- ✓ Strategic fighting beats raw aggression—control the distance, attack in combinations, and always have a game plan.
- ✓ Avoid common mistakes by training with intention—stay mobile, use combinations, and sharpen both offense and defense.

By mastering mindset and strategy, you will become a calculated, intelligent fighter who can outthink and outmaneuver opponents, whether in sparring, competition, or self-defense.

In the next chapter, we will lay out a structured 4-week training plan, including daily drills and progression strategies to take your Sanda skills to the next level.

Chapter 7: Training Plan & Next Steps

Now that you've learned the fundamentals of Sanda, it's time to put everything into a structured training plan. This chapter provides a 4-week beginner training program designed to build your striking, defense, footwork, and takedown techniques step by step.

This plan is ideal for beginners looking to build a solid foundation or experienced martial artists wanting to integrate Sanda into their training. By following this schedule, you will develop strength, speed, endurance, and fight intelligence in just four weeks.

4-Week Beginner Training Plan

Each week is focused on a specific aspect of Sanda, progressively increasing intensity. The training is broken into:

- ✓ Shadowboxing & Drills – Developing technique, speed, and movement.
- ✓ Bag Work & Pad Work – Building power and striking efficiency.
- ✓ Partner Drills – Enhancing reaction time and fight adaptability.
- ✓ Conditioning & Strength – Improving endurance, agility, and explosive power.

👉 **Training Schedule:** Aim for at least 4-5 training sessions per week, with each session lasting 60-90 minutes.

Week 1: Basic Strikes & Movement

The first week is all about building a strong foundation. This includes learning proper stance, basic punches, kicks, and movement techniques.

Training Focus:

- ✓ Understanding stance & guard positioning
- ✓ Practicing basic strikes (jab, cross, hook, uppercut, roundhouse kick, push kick)
- ✓ Developing footwork & movement

Daily Drills (3-5 Rounds Each):

- ◆ Shadowboxing (3 minutes per round) – Focus on throwing basic combinations while moving.
- ◆ Heavy Bag Work (3 minutes per round) – Practice jab-cross-hook combinations and roundhouse kicks.
- ◆ Ladder Drills & Cone Drills (5 minutes) – Improve footwork and movement speed.
- ◆ Wall Sit & Squats (3 sets of 1 minute each) – Build leg endurance for better stability.

Partner Drills (If Available):

- ✓ Controlled Striking Practice – Throw jab-cross combinations while your partner defends.
- ✓ Push Kick vs. Side Step – One partner throws a push kick, the other practices evading and countering.

👉 Key Goals for Week 1:

- ✓ Develop comfort in your stance & movement.
- ✓ Execute punches and kicks with proper technique.
- ✓ Build endurance and coordination.

Week 2: Defense & Evasion Drills

In Week 2, we shift the focus to defense, evasion, and counter-striking. Learning to avoid attacks and counter efficiently will help you become a more complete fighter.

Training Focus:

- ✓ Defensive movements (head movement, blocking, parrying)
- ✓ Evasion techniques (sidesteps, pivots, footwork drills)
- ✓ Counterattacks after dodging a strike

Daily Drills (3-5 Rounds Each):

- ◆ Slip & Counter Drill (3 minutes per round) – Practice slipping punches and countering with a cross or hook.
- ◆ Evasion Footwork Drill (5 minutes) – Move laterally and pivot to avoid attacks.
- ◆ Parrying & Redirection (3 minutes per round) – Redirect opponent's strikes instead of absorbing them.
- ◆ Core Strength Workout (Planks, Sit-Ups, Hanging Leg Raises, 3 sets each) – Essential for maintaining balance and control.

Partner Drills (If Available):

- ✓ Defensive Sparring – One partner attacks lightly while the other focuses only on defense.
- ✓ Push Kick Catch & Counter – One partner throws a push kick, the other practices catching and countering with a sweep or strike.




Key Goals for Week 2:

-  Improve defensive reflexes.
-  Learn to move efficiently while staying in a strong stance.
-  Develop smooth counterattacks after evading.

By the end of Week 2, you should feel more comfortable moving under pressure, dodging attacks, and setting up counters. In the next section, we will build on this by focusing on combinations, advanced footwork, and takedown setups.

In Weeks 1 and 2, you focused on building a strong foundation in striking, movement, and defense. Now, in Weeks 3 and 4, we step things up by incorporating combinations, power training, sparring, and fight strategy.

These final weeks will help you:

-  Develop fluid striking combinations that transition between punches, kicks, and takedowns.
-  Increase striking power through explosive training and heavy bag work.
-  Apply techniques in live sparring, refining your strategy and adaptability.

Week 3: Combinations & Power Training

Week 3 is all about putting multiple techniques together into smooth combinations and developing knockout-level striking power.





Training Focus:

- ✓ Executing clean striking combinations (mixing punches, kicks, and sweeps).
- ✓ Increasing power in punches and kicks through explosive training.
- ✓ Maintaining balance while attacking to avoid being countered.

Daily Drills (3-5 Rounds Each):

- ◆ Combination Shadowboxing (3 minutes per round) – Focus on fluid movement while throwing multi-strike combos.
- ◆ Heavy Bag Power Striking (4 rounds, 3 minutes each) – Work on jab-cross-hook-kick combinations with full force.
- ◆ Plyometric Power Training (Box Jumps, Jump Squats, Medicine Ball Slams, 3 sets each) – Improve explosiveness in strikes.
- ◆ Speed Kicking Drill (100 roundhouse kicks per leg) – Develop precision and endurance in your kicking game.

Recommended Sanda Combinations to Practice:

-  Jab → Cross → Hook → Roundhouse Kick
-  Push Kick → Jab → Cross → Side Kick
-  Cross → Hook → Low Sweep
-  Jab → Step Sideways → Spinning Back Kick

Partner Drills (If Available):

- ✓ **Combination Focus Mitt Drills** – One partner holds mitts, the other practices multi-strike combos at full speed.
- ✓ **Sweep & Counter Drill** – One partner throws a strike, the other evades and counters with a sweep or takedown.

 **Key Goals for Week 3:**

- ✓ **Chain multiple strikes together smoothly.**
 - ✓ **Increase overall striking power and endurance.**
 - ✓ **Stay balanced while attacking to prevent being countered.**
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Week 4: Sparring & Fight Strategy

In the final week, you bring everything together in controlled sparring sessions and fight strategy training. This will test your ability to adapt to real fight scenarios, think quickly, and execute techniques under pressure.




Training Focus:

- ✓ **Applying techniques in live sparring**
- ✓ **Developing fight strategy and adaptability**
- ✓ **Managing distance, timing, and energy efficiently**

Daily Drills (3-5 Rounds Each):

- ◆ **Sparring (3-minute rounds, 4-6 rounds per session)** – Apply skills in controlled fighting scenarios.
 - ◆ **Strategy Drills (2 rounds per opponent)** – Work on specific fight tactics (e.g., countering push kicks, maintaining distance, controlling the pace).
 - ◆ **Takedown Setups (3 rounds)** – Practice transitioning from striking into throws and sweeps.
 - ◆ **Conditioning (High-Intensity Interval Training, 15 minutes)** – Build fight endurance.

Types of Sparring to Incorporate:

-  **Technical Sparring** – Focus on landing clean strikes without full power to refine accuracy.
-  **Situational Sparring** – Start in specific positions (e.g., defending against a push kick or fighting inside the clinch).
-  **Full-Contact Sparring (Optional for Advanced Fighters)** – Test your techniques at full intensity with protective gear.

Fight Strategy Training:

- ✓ **Controlling the Pace** – Learning when to be aggressive and when to conserve energy.
- ✓ **Reading Your Opponent** – Identifying patterns, weaknesses, and habits in their fighting style.
- ✓ **Adapting on the Fly** – Adjusting your strategy based on how the fight unfolds.

✓ Using Feints & Baiting Counters – Making your opponent react so you can exploit openings.

Key Goals for Week 4:

- ✓ Put everything together in a live setting.
 - ✓ Improve fight strategy and decision-making.
 - ✓ Stay calm, composed, and adaptable under pressure.
-

Final Thoughts on the Training Plan

By the end of this 4-week program, you will have:

- ✓ Built a strong foundation in Sanda striking, defense, and movement.
- ✓ Developed the ability to string together powerful combinations.
- ✓ Gained confidence in controlled sparring and strategic fighting.

This is just the beginning—true mastery comes from consistent training and refining your skills over time.

In the next section, we'll provide resources for further learning, including advanced training options, online communities, and live coaching opportunities to continue improving your Sanda skills.

Daily Drills for Skill Improvement

Training doesn't stop after this 4-week plan. Consistent daily practice is the key to long-term progress in Sanda. Below is a suggested routine for both solo training and partner drills to keep improving your skills.

Suggested Daily Training Routine

Solo Training (45–60 Minutes)

- ✓ Warm-Up (10 Minutes)
 - Light jogging, jumping rope, or dynamic stretching.
- ✓ Shadowboxing (3 Rounds, 3 Minutes Each)
 - Focus on fluid movement, punch-kick combos, and footwork drills.
- ✓ Heavy Bag or Pad Work (3–5 Rounds, 3 Minutes Each)
 - Emphasize power, speed, and accuracy with punches, kicks, and sweeps.

✔ Defense & Evasion Drills (5 Minutes)

- Practice slipping, blocking, and pivoting away from imaginary strikes.

✔ Takedown Practice (5 Minutes, If Possible)

- Use a grappling dummy or solo movement drills to improve takedown entries.

✔ Strength & Conditioning (10 Minutes)

- Core work (planks, leg raises), explosive training (jump squats, push-ups).

✔ Cool Down & Stretching (5 Minutes)

- Static stretches to improve flexibility and prevent injury.
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Partner Training (60–90 Minutes, 2–3 Times Per Week)

✔ Technical Drills (15 Minutes)

- Work on controlled striking, defensive reactions, and counterattacks.

✔ Sparring Rounds (4–6 Rounds, 3 Minutes Each)

- Rotate between light technical sparring, situational sparring, and full-contact rounds (if advanced).

✔ Takedown & Throw Practice (10 Minutes)

- Set up throws and sweeps from real-time exchanges.

✔ Pad Work (10 Minutes Each Partner)

- One partner holds pads while the other practices power striking and combinations.

✔ Fight Simulation (10 Minutes)

- React to different scenarios (aggressive opponent, defensive fighter, clinch work).

◆ Tip: Always focus on proper technique over raw power—the goal is efficiency and precision.

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