

SEN-NO-SEN GO-NO-SEN

TAI-NO-SEN

There are three basic strategies of conflict in karate. The first is referred to as *sen* which translates as “seizing the initiative” or attacking. The second strategy is *sen no sen*, which loosely translates as “waiting for the opponent to attack and countering.” The final strategy is *go no sen*, which translates as “countering the opponent’s initiative before it physically occurs”³ This final strategy relates directly to the hidden meaning of the second precept.

SEN-NO-SEN

The term “Sen no Sen” means to **attack your opponent before he initiates the attack** he has already decided on. This is often the cause of misunderstandings as it is for many a counter mentally, but not physically, in the true sense. With Karate we commonly use the term “Deai Waza” meaning to take the initiative at the moment of understanding of encounter. Remember, that the term Sen is always before and think of Sen no Sen as “the initiative of attack”. Many students commence this action but invariably end up using Go no Sen as the block and counter is prevalent. Think of using the distance marker as an understanding. If you are able to penetrate further than 50% then you are in accord with Sen but if you are unable to penetrate more than 50% before the opponent determines his attack or counter you will if you block properly move to Go no Sen.

GO-NO-SEN

The term “Go no Sen” means to **attack your opponent after he has taken the initiative**. The misunderstanding here is because of the use of Sen meaning before but prefixed by the term Go meaning after. In principle, it is a parry or block, knowing already what your opponent was going to do then for the attack and subsequent counter, and using a counter attack before him. In general, this is used commonly by default as the ability to read the opponent is often late. However, it can also be where you attack your opponent only to provoke, he parries your attack and as he counters you exploit the gap and counter decisively before he is able to undertake his action. Remember, the term Go means after and think of Go no Sen as “the initiative of the body”. It is important also to understand that the essence of Go no Sen incorporates the ability to control your opponent’s timing by your own presence and posture and dictate the attack options and commencement. In Japan the skilled student of Go no Sen has a strong dynamic character or spirit (Kihaku), which affects any opponent.

TAI-NO-SEN

The term Tai no Sen means to **attack an opponent when he attacks you**. It is commonly induced by the ability to present a weak posture, encouraging the opponent to attack. At this point you must use Tai Sabaki to move and change the distance followed by a feint which the opponent parry’s and as he relaxes to undertake his next attack then execute the strike to defeat your opponent. It is always important to create a void between actions to unbalance your opponent. Please remember the term Tai is in principle to wait and not the Tai for body and think of Tai no Sen as “the initiative of waiting”.