

## Ukemi - Break Falling

Break-falling allows you to fall without injuring yourself and especially protects your head. The three basic directions are forwards, backwards, and sideways. To begin, practice ukemi from seiza no kamae (kneeling) and ensui no kamae (squatting posture). Once simple break-falling from different heights and positions has been mastered, other applications such as silent break-falling, break-falling with a weapon, break-falling followed by a roll, picking up objects, changing your direction, being pushed, and break-falling accompanied with a punch or kick or both, may be attempted. Different Ryu-ha have different break-falls or none at all. What is described here is just one way of falling in each direction.

Zenpo Ukemi - from shizen no kamae either fall forwards or throw yourself forward by kicking one leg out to the rear. At the last instance before impact bring your arms out in front of you. Place one hand on top of the other so that they cross about a foot in front of your face. Land flat on the bottom of your forearms and palms so that the entire surface of both arms hits the ground at the same time. The only parts of your body that should be touching the ground are your forearms, palms, and toes of the feet or foot kept on the ground. The raised leg may be used to kick on the way down and acts as a shock absorber. From this position you may roll forwards or sideways by throwing the raised leg over the bottom leg. You should also be able to spring back up instantly and kick etc. The most important thing is that all parts of your forearm and palms hit the ground at the same instant and that you relax by breathing out.

Koho Ukemi - from shizen no kamae fall backwards or kick one leg straight out and bend the other knee to take you down and backwards as fast and hard as possible. To break your fall, bend your knees to lower yourself (if possible) and slightly curve your back so that your entire back does not hit at the same time - your buttocks should hit first and your shoulders last (as though you are rolling) if possible. Use your arms at 45° from your body, palms down, to help cushion your fall. The hands and arms should not be slapped onto the ground. Slightly lift your hands so that they do not make contact with the ground as the rest of the arms (elbows slightly bent) progressively rocks onto the ground. The arms should be positioned to make your shoulderblades stick out to help lift your head off the ground. From here either roll backwards over one shoulder using your hands to push you up and back thereby creating more distance; or throw your arms up and forward to help you stand back up. As usual, position the arms at the last instant, keep your head off the ground, and relax.

Sokuho Ukemi - from Shizen no kamae fall sideways or cross one leg horizontally in front of the other whilst bending your other knee. This will take you quickly to the ground on your side. To break your impact use the entire underside of the arm closest to the ground at a 45° angle to your body and the other hand by crossing it near the grounded elbow, both palms facing down. The underside of your arm and palm must be positioned at the last instance and hit the ground simultaneously. From here roll sideways over your shoulders. Remember to keep your head up off the ground and to relax.