

BRUCE LEE

The Official Publication & Voice of the Jun Fan Jeet Kune Do Nucleus

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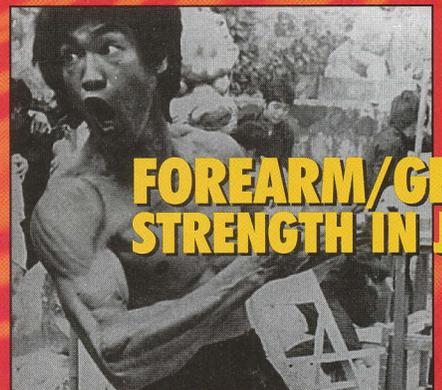
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FOREARM/ GRIP STRENGTH IN JKD

By Chris Kent
Photos by Angel Griggs, Idaho

There is a scene in the movie "Return of the Dragon" in which the crime boss slaps Bruce Lee's character twice in the face. As he is about to hit him a third time, Lee suddenly grabs the man's hand in midair and stops him cold. The man is unable to release his arm from Lee's grip and in obvious pain as Lee squeezes it very hard. It's only when one of the boss' henchmen puts a gun to Bruce's head that he releases his grip and lets the man go.

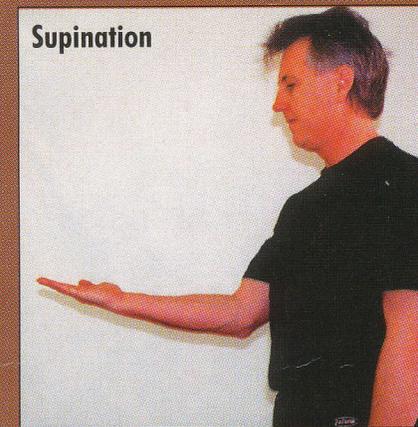
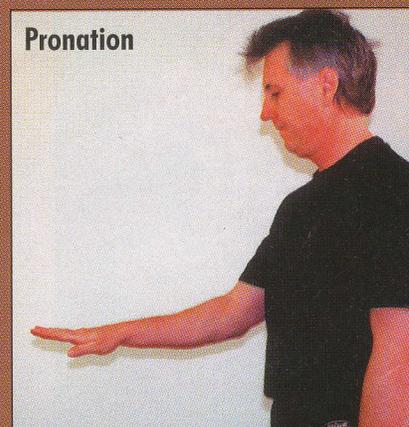
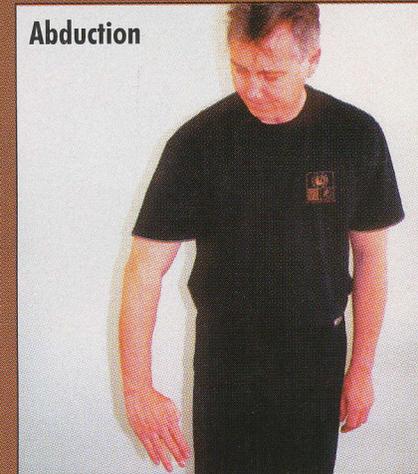
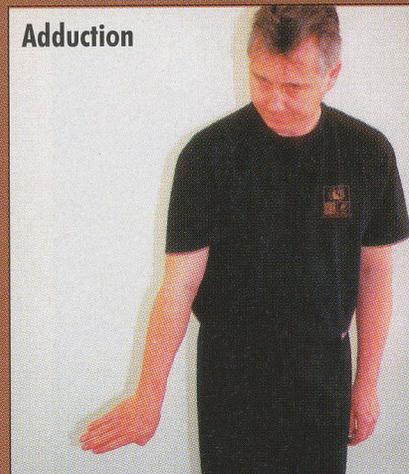
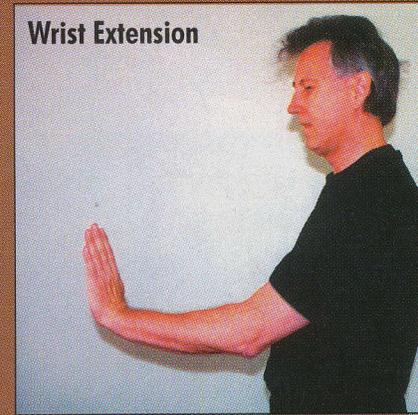
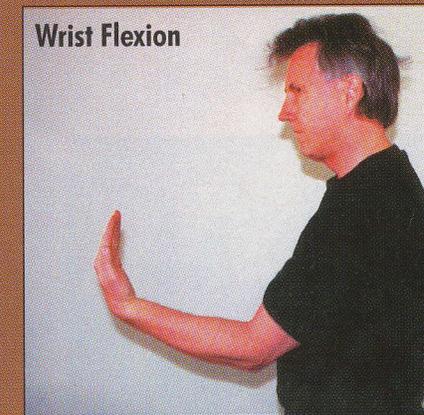
Like the rest of his body, Bruce's forearms were incredibly developed. Bob Wall, who worked with Bruce in both 'Return of the Dragon' and 'Enter the Dragon', stated, "Bruce had the biggest forearms proportionate to anybody's body that I've ever seen. His forearms were huge. He had incredibly powerful wrists and fingers." Taky Kimura, Bruce's first

assistant instructor and oldest friend noted, "If you grabbed hold of Bruce's forearm, it was like grabbing hold of a baseball bat." And according to Dan Inosanto, another of Bruce's assistant instructors and closest friends, "Bruce had such a powerful grip that he could take you to the ground simply by grabbing one of your wrists and squeezing. The pain was so intense that even if you wanted to hit with your free hand or kick you couldn't. He would also use his forearm like a club to smash into your arms and knock them aside."

Forearm/grip strength is an important asset in Jun Fan Jeet Kune Do. It comes into play in all facets of fighting including offense, defense, and countering, and is of critical use for such things as grabbing, pushing, pulling, pinching, and hitting. You may be incredibly "strong", but if you don't have the grip to hold on to an opponent's arm, or the forearm solidity to deliver the power behind your straight punch, the strength is all for nothing. Powerful wrists and fingers also help to protect against and reduce the risk of injuries to this part of your body.

ANATOMY OF THE FOREARM

Total forearm/grip strength is dependent on the strength of the forearm muscles, and the tendon and ligament power in the hands and fingers. For the sake of simplicity in this article, I have not listed the anatomical names of all of the forearm muscles. Those interested may refer to an anatomical textbook for the technical nomenclature. The forearm is composed of two major groups of muscles, those that flex the wrist (Flexors) and those that extend the wrist (Extensors). These muscles have more



specific functions such as bending the wrist to one side or the other or turning it up or down. Members of both groups extend beyond the wrist and help to open and close the hand. The motions of the forearm include:

- a) Wrist flexion – raising the palm side of hand towards inside of the forearm.
- b) Wrist extension – straightens

- the wrist from flexed position
- c) Dorsi-flexion – raises back of hand towards back of forearm
- d) Adduction – movement of hand towards little finger side of wrist
- e) Abduction – movement of hand towards thumb side of wrist
- f) Pronation – rotation of wrist to palm down position
- g) Supination – rotation of wrist

to palm up position

The motions of the fingers include:

- a) Finger flexion (closing the hand)
- b) Finger extension (opening the hand)

Each of the motions listed above is the result of several individual forearm muscles working together in 'groups'. As with other areas of the body, muscle groups work against each other in pairs to provide stability. For this reason, it's important that you work for 'balanced development' around the associated forearm joint, and devote equal time and effort to working opposing muscle groups. Using this balanced approach will help you achieve "functional forearm/grip strength."

FOREARM TRAINING

A certain amount of forearm strength is developed in all forms of weight training where the hands are used (bench press, lat pulldown, etc.) However, the development you will receive is far from maximum, and none of these exercises, in themselves, will fully develop the type of strength you want in Jun Fan Jeet Kune Do. Exercises specifically designed for the forearm (wrist, hands and fingers) can be isolated from general body movements and require little expenditure of energy. Also, the tendons and ligaments of the hands and fingers don't require rest periods as long as those required following a strenuous all-round strength development program. For this reason some form of grip exercise can be done 5-6 days per week. Bruce Lee was so obsessed with strengthening his forearms that he used to train them every day. Linda Lee Cadwell laughingly recalls that, "Bruce was a forearm fanatic. If

anyone came out with a new forearm course, Bruce would have to get it."

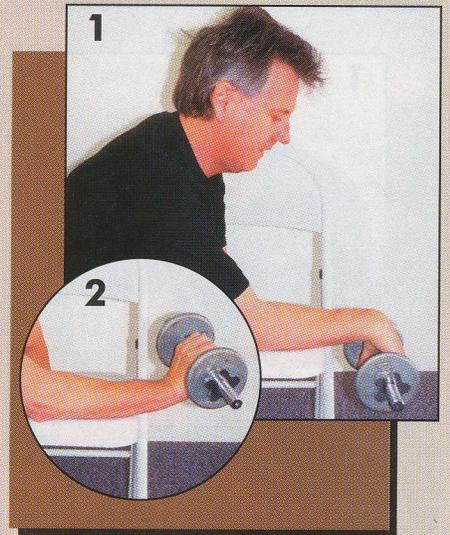
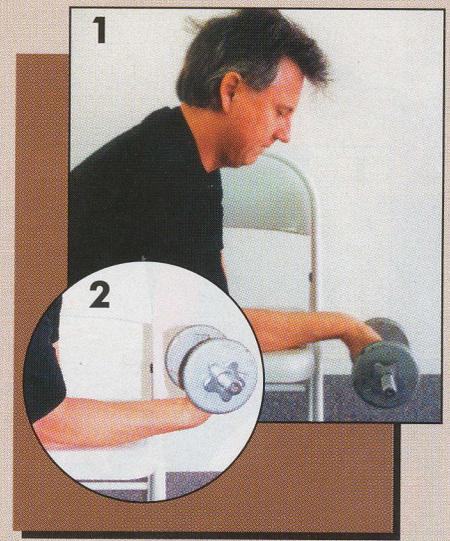
EXERCISES

The following are primary exercises Bruce Lee used for forearm development:

1) Palm-up Wrist Curls – This exercise can be done with either a straight barbell or dumbbells, and develops the wrist flexors. Place the forearms in full support across an exercise bench or other flat surface (you can also use your own knees), with your hands hanging over the edge and holding the weight in a palm-up grip. Raise the weight in a curling motion toward the inside of your forearm, contracting the flexors as much as possible. Slowly lower the weight to its original position, and repeat for the desired number of repetitions.

2) Palm-down Wrist Curls – This exercise develops the extensors, and is performed in exactly the same manner as the palm-up wrist curls except that your hands are palm down and you raise the back of the hands with the weights upward. Note—Since the extensor muscles are usually much weaker than the flexors, you will have to start with a lower weight in order to execute the exercise through a full range of motion. Also, if you are using dumbbells, don't turn the hand as you raise it, as this brings in other muscles which detracts from the full use of the extensors.

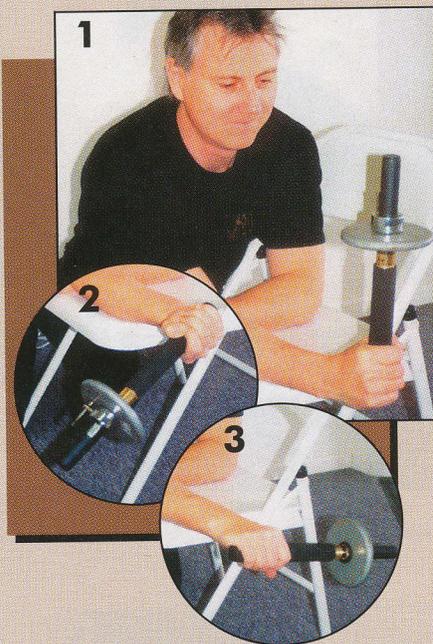
3) Ulna Flexion – The forearm muscles involved in wrist adduction are the target of this exercise. To do this exercise you will need a Single Ended Dumbbell (often referred to as 'Thor's Hammer') Stand with the unweighted end in your hand and with the weight facing directly behind you. Relax the wrist and allow the weighted end of the dumbbell to angle



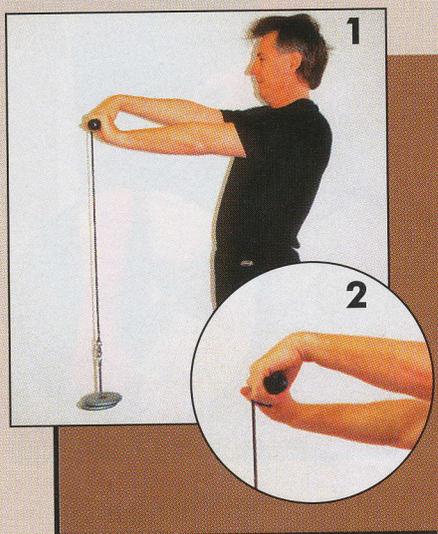


downward. Using only your wrist, contract the muscles and raise the weight up behind you as high as possible. Lower the weight and repeat for as many reps as necessary. Note – Be sure to start light and control the weight at all times.

← 4) Radial Flexion – This exercise targets the wrist abductors. It's done in exactly the same manner as the exercise for ulna flexion, except that the weighted end of the dumbbell now points in front of you. Keeping your arm as straight as possible and using only your wrist, raise the weighted end as high as possible.



← 5) Supination – Pronation (Leverage Bar Twists) – This exercise works the forearm muscles involved in turning the forearm to a palm-up or palm-down position. Place your forearm on an exercise and hold the single-end dumbbell with the weighted end up and forming a ninety-degree angle with your arm. Slowly rotate your forearm, lowering the weight as you turn the wrist to a palm-up position (supination), then rotate the bar to a palm-down position (pronation). Be careful to control the weight throughout the entire motion as you rotate the weight back and forth for the necessary repetitions.



← 6) Wrist Roller – Hold the wrist roller with your hands in a palm-down position and your arms extended directly out in front of you at shoulder level. Revolve the bar by rolling your wrists until the cord is rolled up completely. When winding the bar up, turn the top of the bar away from you. Lower the weight by unwinding the cord and turning the top of the bar towards you. Note – You can also reverse the positions and roll the weight up by turning the top of the bar towards you, and away

from you as you unwind it.

7) Wrist Roller (Alternate Version) – The wrist roller can also be used by standing on a high box or chair and allowing the arms to hang in front of the body instead of directly out. This method does not tire the shoulders.

8) Reverse Curls – This exercise strengthens the extensor muscles and helps target the brachioradialis muscle in the forearm. Stand holding a barbell with your hands in a palm-up position, about shoulder width apart. Curl the weight upwards until the barbell touches your upper chest. Lower and repeat for as many reps as necessary.

ADDITIONAL FOREARM EXERCISES

The following exercises can also be used to develop forearm and finger strength.

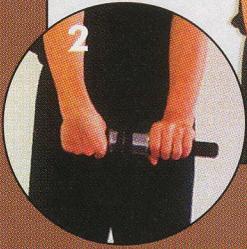
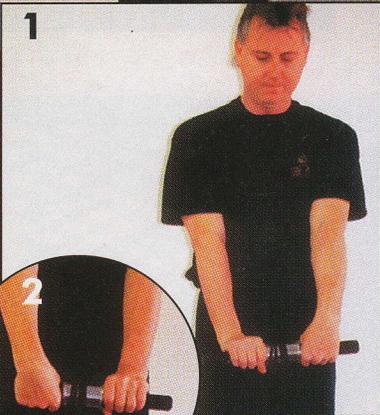
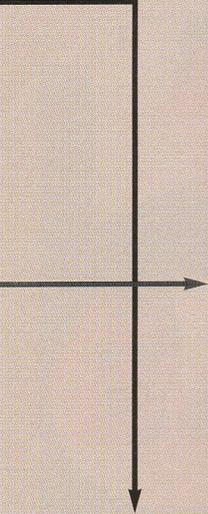
1) Fingertip pushups – Start with using all of the fingers and gradually reduce the number of fingers you use.

2) Gripping Machine
See pg.68 for picture.

3) Catching the Yellow Page book with various combinations of fingers to help develop grip strength.
See pg.68 for picture.

4) Gripping a rubber ball. Practice squeezing with emphasis on different fingers in different arm positions such as the wrist bent downwards or upwards, with the arm straight or bent at the elbow. The ball can be squeezed with thumb and any one, two, three or four fingers in singles, paired together or total grip positions.

Besides weight exercises, there are



many other pieces of exercise equipment that are designed to help develop forearm/grip strength, including various types of sponge or spring wrist grippers, and "Power Putty." Regardless of the methods used, it's advisable to change the exercise (i.e. wrist curl, gripping machine, wrist roller, etc.) occasionally. The variety will work the muscle groups at different angles and give you better overall development. Bruce Lee continuously experimented with many training programs to get the best results. The bottom line though, is still progressive overload on the muscle to stimulate growth. The following are Lee's notes concerning forearm exercises:

1) Do the exercise with complete extension and contraction by maintaining a good grip on the bar at all times.

2) For better results, thicken the bar by wrapping something around it. (Note - One of the reasons for this is that if the bar is too narrow and you squeeze it hard, the tendons crossing the wrist tighten too much and don't allow the wrist to flex through a full range of motion)

3) Never cheat on any exercise; use the amount of weight that you can handle without undue strain.

4) Carry a sponge gripper with you and use daily as much as possible. 🇺🇸

SOURCES

- 1) *The Art of Expressing the Human Body* - Bruce Lee - (Tuttle Publishing, 1998)
- 2) *The Wrestling Physical Conditioning Encyclopedia* - John Jesse - (The Athletic Press)
- 3) *Power Forearms* - (Health For Life Publishing, 1984)
- 4) *Forearms* - Michael Yessis PhD (Muscle and Fitness Magazine)

