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# **Nunchaku In Action**

**J.C. Hess**

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**Title: Nunchaku In Action**

**Author: J.C. Hess**

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## PUBLISHER'S NOTE

This book was conceived by Joseph Hess to give all instructors of the martial arts a better understanding of how to teach the nunchaku as a tool for kata and as an effective self-defense weapon. It was also designed for advanced training in law enforcement work. Police departments who have found the nunchaku to be a valuable alternative to the traditional night stick will find this a thorough manual for instruction in this ancient weapon.

Hess has perfected his training course for the past dozen years, instructing more than 300 law enforcement agencies both in the U.S. and in Central America in the use of the nunchaku. The essentials of nunchaku handling and training are outlined, and Hess has included a wealth of self-defense situations and a special section on his own recommended workout for students who are serious about nunchaku training.

There is also a sample page of Hess' own task performance evaluation that is a guideline for instructors on grading a student's performance and suggesting ways for improvement. It is one method of judging a student's progress in kobudo training. The rules and methods laid down in this book are not engraved in stone, but Hess has found through his many years of law enforcement work that many traditional techniques of the nunchaku will not necessarily be effective in all situations on the street, and therefore has devised some of his own applications of weapon handling.

Instructors particularly may want to alter some aspects of the training outlined here. We remind you only that this manual illustrates how Hess has effectively taught nunchaku handling to hundreds of law enforcement agencies and his own black belts.

As a final note, please study carefully the illustrations and text before attempting any of the basic motions and self-defense techniques. It is for your own safety as well as for any partner working with you. The nunchaku is a serious weapon and often illegal to possess in certain states. Those who want to learn this weapon must have serious intentions and must respect the weapon and others who use it. The nunchaku can be an advanced path along the way of martial arts training, a new discipline for a student's body and mind. That is appropriate, for the nunchaku has for centuries been a very effective tool of the Okinawan karate systems.

## INTRODUCTION

At first glance one might think that the nunchaku is merely a bundle of sticks tied together with a piece of rope or string. To the unsuspecting attacker, however, this weapon is akin to an unleashed tiger, leaping to deliver one swift strike. Once a farm implement used for threshing grain by the indigenous people of Okinawa, the nunchaku has become a weapon surrounded by controversy. Considered by many states as a deadly weapon, illegal to possess, the nunchaku has many nicknames: chucks, speed sticks, nutcracker, flail, swing sticks.

Rules and regulations need to be established by qualified martial arts instructors and police departments to standardize the use of the nunchaku. Too many instructors introduce their students to the nunchaku before they are ready, teaching this weapon to beginners to retain their interest in the martial arts and curb the dropout rate. This is improper and irresponsible. If one is a dedicated student of the martial arts, he or she will have plenty of time to find out about the nunchaku. Unfortunately, martial arts movies have given this weapon a lot of publicity, and tend to show this weapon giving users superhuman ability. Defeating an opponent is not the sole purpose of the nunchaku. It is an ancient weapon that can reveal to the serious martial artist better uses for his body, a source of inspiration for kata and a dynamic tool for improving his martial arts training.

The clear advantage of the nunchaku in police work is its unequalled ability to block any attack and then instantly be converted for use as a come-along tool—a suspect in the pinch of a nunchaku hold has no choice but to “come along.”

When closed, the nunchaku can be used in very close quarters, or if extended, it has a reach several inches more than the standard patrolman’s night stick. Spun about the body, it can keep opponents from getting too close. A policeman who knows the nunchaku intimately will have more confidence and will be less likely to rely on his service revolver to end a hostile situation, nor will he necessarily need to break bones with the weapon. With its multiplicity of holds and takedown techniques, the nunchaku is ideal for self-defense without resorting to deadly force.

To list some of the advantages of the nunchaku:

- It has a speed ratio that is seven times faster than a night stick.
- When closed, it can be carried easily in the back pocket.

- When in motion, it is nearly impossible to grab and take away.
- It exerts a great deal of pressure when used in a come-along hold—up to 150 pounds per square inch.
- An assailant can be struck even when he's directly behind you.
- The ridges can cause extreme, incapacitating pain.
- Blocks can be delivered in two places at the same time.
- Constant practice improves quickness and confidence.

Some disadvantages of the weapon are:

- The nunchaku requires more practice than any other weapon.
- If untrained, a person trying to use a nunchaku may cause more harm to himself than to an attacker.
- The centrifugal force of the nunchaku sticks when spun in motion can easily break bones.
- If not checked regularly for wear, the string or cord can break, causing the sticks to fly out of control.
- Without practice on a heavy punching bag, the recoil affect of the weapon can cause injury to one's fingers, elbows, face, knees, etc.
- Use of the nunchaku is often illegal (depending on the state) and can bring on lawsuits.

For law enforcement officers, some of the dos and don'ts of nunchaku training are:

- Avoid head contact.
- Use only when all other means of compliance have failed.
- Strike bone areas first.
- Do not strike drugged or intoxicated persons.
- Use as a come-along tool first—a striking tool last.
- Keep the nunchaku locked up when off duty.
- Never "show off" or demonstrate with them, and never give the nunchaku to anyone.
- Check it periodically for wear, frayed string or rough edges.

During my two decades of martial arts training, and my dozen years in law enforcement, I have seen many weapons come and go. The nunchaku is one weapon that will never lose its effectiveness. After training more than 300 law enforcement agencies, dozens of black belts and many government agencies, I feel that for those who know the capabilities of the nunchaku and who respect its tradition, they have an unbeatable combination for self-defense.

—Joseph C Hess  
Fort Lauderdale, Florida  
February, 1983

# PERFORMANCE OBJECTIVES

## ACTIVITY TASK SHEET

### INSTRUCTOR RATING

ACTIVITY or DRILL EVALUATION OF TECHNIQUE	Good		Fair		Poor	
	L	R	L	R	L	R
1.						
2.						
3.						
4.						
5.						
6.						
7.						
8.						
9.						
10.						
COMMENTS:						

When evaluating a student's ability with the nunchaku, I use a task sheet like the one pictured above. This performance activity task sheet should be filled in by each instructor to keep a running report on the student's progress after each technique, drill, exercise, or defense technique. The student will be watched carefully by the instructor and given ten times to display his proficiency. At the bottom of the sheet is a place for the instructor's comments, which will aid the student and let him know where he is the weakest. At the top under your rating scale you will also see "L" for Left Hand and "R" for Right Hand. Under evaluation of technique you should write good points or bad points that the student makes when working with the nunchaku.

## TYPES OF NUNCHAKU

### ROUNDED NUNCHAKU

This is the popular street model, and is not as effective for control work, only for long- and short-distance blocking and striking.



### RUBBER PRACTICE NUNCHAKU

Ideal for the novice when first learning how to handle the nunchaku. It allows practice without injury to a partner or oneself. This is not good for working out on a heavy bag. Also constant pressure will break the top of this weapon.



### RIDGED NUNCHAKU

Best type for police work because of the effectiveness of the ridged edges which can cause great pain when used for pinch holds and strikes. It is an excellent come-along tool.



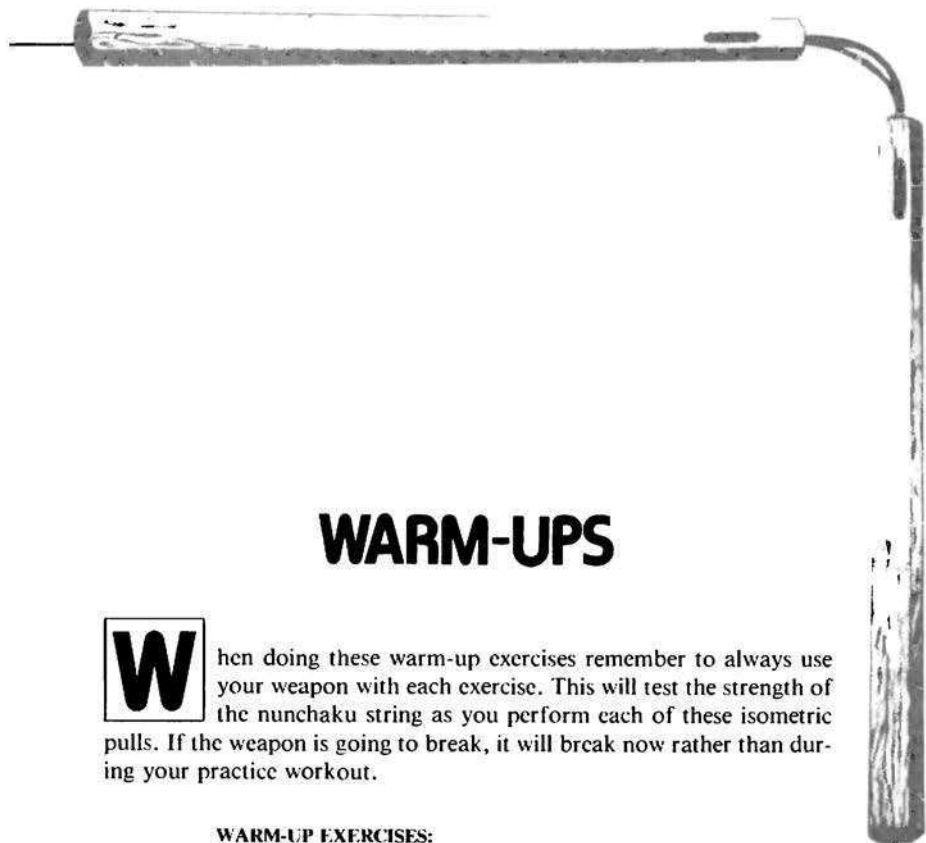




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## WARM-UPS

**W**hen doing these warm-up exercises remember to always use your weapon with each exercise. This will test the strength of the nunchaku string as you perform each of these isometric pulls. If the weapon is going to break, it will break now rather than during your practice workout.

### WARM-UP EXERCISES:

1. Horizontal Pull (Low)
2. Overhead Pull (Standing)
3. Vertical Side Pull (Left and Right)
4. Back Pull (Down)
5. Back Pull (Up)
6. Back Pull (Outward)
7. Overhead Pull (Seated)
8. Forward Pull
9. Squat Pull



#### **HORIZONTAL PULL (Low)**

Keeping a firm grip on the nunchaku, try to pull it apart. Hold for about ten seconds and repeat a total of five times. These exercises will build up strength in your wrists and arms, as well as firm your natural grip.



#### **OVERHEAD PULL (Standing)**

Extend the nunchaku overhead and repeat the same outward pull against the center of the nunchaku. Repeat five times, holding each pull a total of ten seconds.