

BRITAIN'S **No 1** MARTIAL ARTS MAGAZINE

# MARTIAL ARTS

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# Frank Murphy's masterclass equipment

## Airshields

**This is the fourth article to cover equipment and this month we look at airshields or the larger target pad. As the name suggests this means a target pad full of air, however some of the larger and squarer types called airshields may be filled with lightweight padding.**

Although there are many types of pads/shields on the market the two most common are the curved and the straight square targets.

If you ever look at the old photos of Bruce Lee in training you'll notice he used about every size and dimension of airshield that he could find or devise to enhance a variety of kicks. Now while we all just want to kick the pad, holding it is something a lot of us either picked up along the way or take for granted that we know.

However, if you are an instructor, holding any type of training equipment to benefit the wide range of kicking techniques is not something to take for granted. In today's litigation society

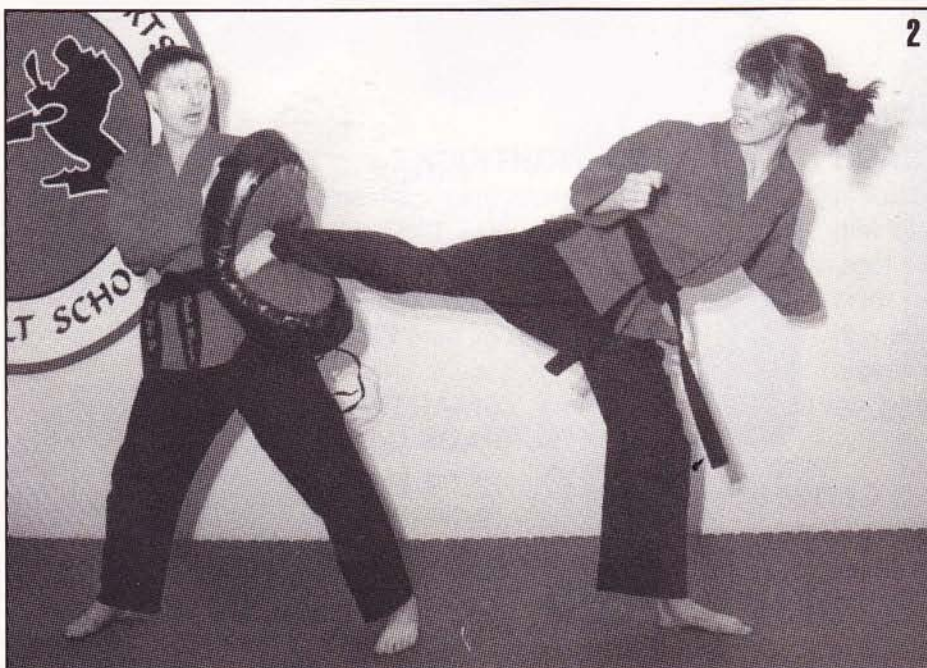
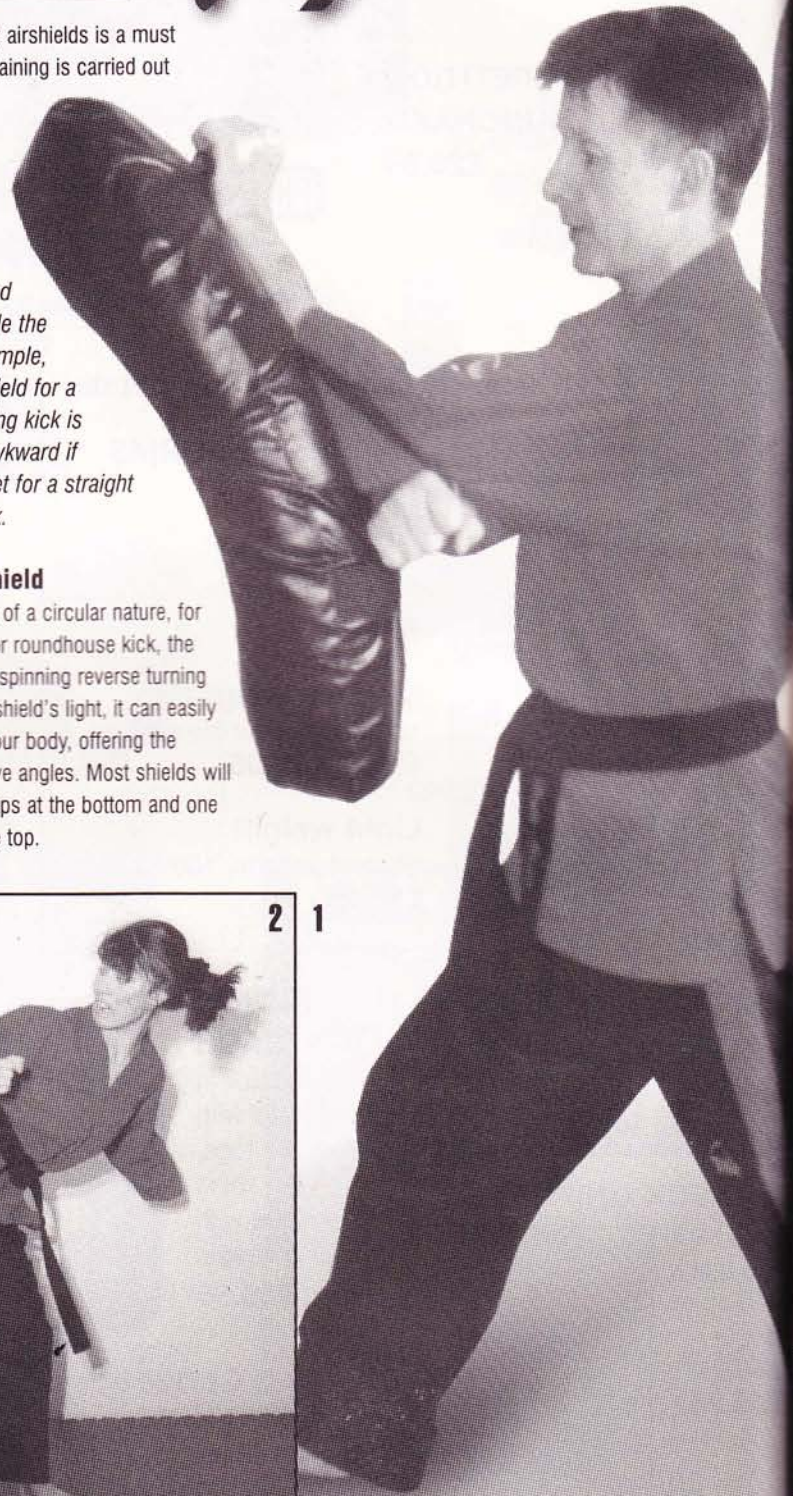
proper care in holding airshields is a must and will ensure that training is carried out safely.

### **Important Note:**

*The way an airshield is held depends on how or what kick is practised and from which angle the kick comes. For example, holding a curved shield for a roundhouse or turning kick is fine but would be awkward if presented as a target for a straight kick, like a back kick.*

### **The Curved Airshield**

This is ideal for kicks of a circular nature, for example the turning or roundhouse kick, the hooking kick and the spinning reverse turning kick. Because the airshield's light, it can easily be held away from your body, offering the kicker a few alternative angles. Most shields will have two vertical straps at the bottom and one horizontal strap at the top.



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regulars

In picture one take position on your favourite and strongest side and adopt a stance that will offer maximum support. Because the shield's so light you can hold it away from your body slightly out to the side. Insert one arm at the bottom and connect with the two bottom straps and hold the top strap supporting your forearm with your elbow. Remember to make sure that you can clearly see the kick coming.

This is ideal for turning kicks, and if a line of, say, four shields are used it makes for a really good workout for eight students working in a line. The changeover should be quick.

### Not Recommended

I would not recommend, however, that you use the same airshield for a straight kick as in picture two which shows a sidekick being delivered. The curved shape at the edges means there is a greater chance of connecting and landing awkwardly.

It allows no margin for error as the blade of the foot must connect bang on in the middle of the shield. If the kicker and the holder are not concentrating totally, accuracy is diminished and for the kicker slipping off the shield and landing badly may result. For the side kick it is best to use the square target shield.

### The Square Target Shield

Picture three shows the correct way to hold this type of square target shield. Although it may be a little heavy it is a larger target and therefore easier to connect with front and sidekicks. Not only does this build confidence and accuracy but it offers less risk of injury. Again take up your strongest

position, or your favourite side, taking hold of the straps and holding fairly tightly into your body. Again make sure that both kicker and holder can clearly see each other.

Picture four shows an alternative position for using the square target shield for low roundhouse kicks. Holding a shield this way for these low kicks allows the holder's legs to bend and absorb the impact.

**Note:** One word that is very important when it comes to focus pads and shields is 'intensity'. The amount of power used in your training should vary from hitting with full force to holding your chambering knee up high and flicking your kicks and punches to the target. For example, against the shield in picture four an alternative to blasting the target with a hard side kick would be to stand next to the target and execute a jump back kick while spinning away from the target. This type of training still uses the shield but gives the kicker a handicap and the holder a brief respite.

Finally thanks to those readers who emailed to say they enjoyed this series of articles. Your most-asked questions will be addressed in next month's Masterclass which will focus on getting a really good workout while avoiding injuries.

**Frank Murphy will celebrate thirty years of training in 2004. Founder of Family Martial Arts International he has recently expanded to pioneer inspirational debate for the martial arts industry in Europe. Founder of a dynamic new system which keeps students active, his company offers weekends or midweek intensive courses with nationally recognised certification in Kai Zen Do. Available for seminars and instructors workshops he can be contacted on 01474 326967 or e-mail him on [mbs.blackbelt@virgin.net](mailto:mbs.blackbelt@virgin.net) or visit [www.familymartialarts.co.uk](http://www.familymartialarts.co.uk).**