

13 Step Jo Form

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The Jo: The jo is a four-foot, straight (un-tapered at the ends like a Bo), wooden (usually oak) staff 7/8 inch in diameter. Pine dowel rods of the same dimensions are available at any hardware store.

The Form: Like all forms you should move as if you are fighting an opponent about your size. “Step” means to move your back foot to the front. “Slide” means to move the front foot forward about one foot then bring the back foot up to return to the same position (this is for the front “slide”). The “midline” is an imaginary line between you and the opponent at the start of the form. The “far”/“near” (horizontal position) or “upper”/“lower” (vertical position) tip position of the jo should be obvious. See the YouTube video below for the move specifics.

Begin with your body in the right back stance. The jo is held vertically with the left hand just below the upper tip and with the lower tip on the floor at arms length in front of the left foot.

1. Lift the jo straight up off the floor about 6 inches then twist the left wrist to bring the lower tip backwards to the right hand held at the side of the belt. Slide the left foot forward while the right foot slides to the left of midline, and thrust the jo forward with the right hand as the jo slips through the left hand into the opponent’s breastbone. (You are avoiding the attacker’s thrust by stepping to the side and counter-attack with a thrust.)

2. The right foot steps forward to the right of midline and the left foot moves to a left back stance to the right of midline. Simultaneously the far tip is brought vertical as the hands exchange positions (just like changing hands with a Bo) with the jo pointing backwards over the right shoulder, the left hand on the near end of the jo and the right hand about 6 inches above the left. As you step forward the jo is brought down like a sword stroke to hit the opponents left head or neck. (The attacker moves backward and you continue counter-attack.)

3. Slide backwards to the midline in a left back stance while the jo is brought back to an overhead block. Note that the jo is held with open hands between the thumb and index finger. (The front tip comes across with a “J” hook as if deflecting an attacker’s thrust to the side and up.)

4. Bring the jo down to the left side, slide forward, and thrust the jo into the breastbone.

5. Step forward in the midline with first the left and then the right foot to turn around 180° (to face a new opponent). While turning, pull the jo back through the right hand until the right hand is about 8 inches from the far tip, then the left hand slides up to the mid staff, then rotate the left hand forward and the right hand back in front of the right shoulder as the back tip spins around to strike the opponents right face. Then let the left hand go and use the right hand to rotate the far tip down and back 270° to point the jo straight up in front of the right shoulder (thumb of the right hand will point down) and re-grasp the bottom of the jo with the left hand.

6. Keeping the palm of the right hand on the jo, open the fingers of the right hand, rotate the palm 180° clockwise, and re-grasp the jo (now with the thumb up) as you step forward with the right foot as in Step 2 and strike the opponents left head with a sword stroke.

7. Spinning on the ball of the right foot, turn left 180° sweeping the jo around with the left hand at the side of the belt. (Blocking the attacker’s thrust.)

8. Slide forward and thrust to the opponent’s breastbone.

9. Slide backwards while pulling the jo back through the right hand until the left hand is at the side of the belt. The left hand stays next to the belt and guides the jo as the right hand now pushes the jo backwards to strike the knee of the opponent in back of you.

10. Step forward with the left foot while swinging the back tip of the jo around to strike the opponent’s right face.

11. Pull the jo straight back then thrust jo straightforward to strike the opponent’s face/upper chest.

12. Slide back and release the right hand, use the left hand to rotate the far tip of the jo down and re-grasp the end of the jo with the right hand at the side of the belt. (This can be a strike to the top of the head [as in Northern Chi No Kon Dai] or knocking the weapon from the attacker’s hand.)

13. Slide forward and strike the opponent’s breastbone.

Slide back and return to the starting position holding the jo in front of you. You may then bring the jo to behind the right shoulder: twist the left hand to bring the lower tip back towards the body. You may either use the right had on the top of the jo about 1/3 of the way from the left hand and continue to rotate the jo back behind the right shoulder OR as you rotate the jo backwards grab with the right hand in the same position under the jo and continue rotating the jo to the back of the right shoulder. Grabbing the jo “under” leads to a faster spin.

References:

1. JO: Art of the Japanese Short Staff, by Dave Lowry, Black Belt Books, 1987

2. JO, The Japanese Short Staff, by Don Zier and Tom Lang, Unique Publications, 1985

3. “13 Movement Jo Kata by Duncan Francis” on youtube:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-22btoWSwV8>

4. Jo kata partner drill (modified 13 movements): <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OzPdFvr8V0c&feature=related>