

Welcome to the first book in a series of informational documents
about The Art & Science of Ukemi.

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Falling Down For Fun



A free document for Instructors & Students of all styles.

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Falling Down for Fun

Introductions first:

My name is Sensei Paul Fox and I started in the martial arts in the early 70's. At that time my parents could no longer afford to have me play hockey (my first choice). I had just grown out of yet another pair of skates and the rest of my equipment was well beyond tattered.



In no time at all, my dad had me off and on my way to the local Dojo (practice hall). My father had spent time in the Canadian Military so he was no stranger to combat techniques. His training had been a varied mixture of Judo and Jiu-jitsu and whatever else was interesting at that time.

Anyway, one Saturday morning we headed off for my introduction to the Martial Arts. My first class came in the form of Judo at the Hatashita Judo club in Waterloo, Ontario. At that time the club was located in the lower level of Waterloo Square.

It was in this beginning time that I was taught one of the most important building blocks of the Martial Arts,

“the art of falling down and not being hurt.”

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I stayed at the Judo club for some time but I must admit I am not a highly competitive person so I didn't particularly shine in the tournament setting. I did however, learn the basic techniques of Judo and more importantly

I discovered a strange phenomenon

The student with the best ability to fall safely is asked to be the Uke when Sensei demonstrates a new technique.

"The Uke is the person who is on the receiving end of the throw"

why do I want to be this person? I kept asking, Why does he always pick me ??? I don't think I like this !!!I don't think he likes me !!! ... I think I should go back to Hockey !!!!

Of course, now I know it is a great honor to be selected by Sensei as the Uke. This selection indicates his confidence in your ability to fall comfortably and correctly for the demonstration of technique.

In time I learned that it didn't hurt to be thrown to the floor. My fear gave way to interest and then excitement. I was able to fall and recover quickly without being disoriented, without pain, without trauma, without injury.

I also noticed that as Sensei demonstrated a technique I was able to feel my unbalance and his skillful fluid motion. My body was learning how the technique should ***"feel"***.

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This **“body”** knowledge is critical for any student learning the correct application of any technique. And there is no better way to get it than to work with a fully trained can competent instructor.

The survival strategy I learned so many years ago in the Judo Dojo is still a regular part of every class I teach today.

“I strongly feel the most fundamental building block for throwing techniques continues to be falling safely.”

So without further delay lets get falling



Some friends, who have put in the time and made the **“Ukemi Journey”**, will be working with us and demonstrating some of our basic rolling and falling techniques.

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Phil Anderson and Bruce Wood have varied Martial Arts experience. Both have come to the study of Aiki Jujutsu at about the same time but through two very different paths. One thing they have in common is their expert ability to *roll and fall safely*. My observation over the years has been that this ability is a hallmark of successful students.

Bruce Wood has been practicing since 1985 and his experience includes Kung Fu, Aikido, Karate and Aiki JuJutsu.

Phil Anderson has been practicing since 1985 and his experience includes Kempo Karate and Aiki JuJutsu.



Brian Collins has been training since 1978 and his experience includes JiuJitsu, JKD and Aiki Jujutsu. Brian has spent countless hours in the Dojo training. Without his superior falling ability he would never have survived this long.

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The Front Roll [Kneeling]

Starting with one of the first techniques taught in many Jujutsu schools, the basic front roll. We will look at it from the ground or kneeling position first and then progress to a standing application.

- ✓ At first Phil is on his right foot and left knee
- ✓ The left knee and foot are pulled back behind the right knee (Triangle Stance)
- ✓ He places his hands on the ground for support
- ✓ Then pushes off with his left leg



- ✓ The weight of the roll is taken on the gently rounded arms. The weight is then transmitted diagonally across the back from the shoulder to the hip



Do not bump your head at any time in any technique

- ✓ As Phil moves through the roll attention is give to keeping a round back and strong but flexible arm position



- ✓ All roll should finish in a position of balance and control.
- ✓ Phil is ready now to protect himself with a second roll or perhaps even an attack

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The Front Roll [Standing]

The standing front roll will require much of the same technique but your body will be moving faster through the roll so it is more important to keep your back round, your arms strong but pliable and finish with balance and control.

- ✓
- ✓ Starting in a balance and relaxed posture
- ✓ Bruce will lean forward and push off with his right leg

(Oh ... yes ... Bruce grew longer hair and a beard since the intro photo)

- ✓ His arms remain strong but flexible and are held in a circular (Beach Ball) format.
- ✓ His back is rounded to dissipate the energy of the fall



- ✓ Rounded back and curved arms



- ✓ Balance and control at the end of the roll
- ✓ Awareness of your surroundings and potential threats

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The Back Roll [Kneeling]

The back roll is a critical roll to master. When falling backwards the potential for neck and head injury is *always very high*. Only fall back under controlled conditions when first learning this roll. Start low and progress only when you feel comfortable.



Starting in a balanced and comfortable position

Hands at the ready

Push backwards with your right leg and roll on your back



It is important to move your head to one side and your legs will go over your other shoulder

If you don't move your head and legs you will hit your head !!!

After the roll maintain balance and control

You may find that you are dizzy or disoriented after doing back rolls. This is common and will pass as you continue your practice over the next few months.



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The Back Roll [Standing]

Again the back roll from a standing position is much like from a kneeling position but remember you will be moving much faster. It is imperative that you protect your head and neck when practicing these falls. Control your speed when falling and remember to move your head out of the rolling line. *Move you head to one shoulder and your legs to the other.*



- ✓ In the ready position Bruce will now bend his back leg and lower himself.
- ✓ The roll is executed in a smooth controlled fashion. *Remember don't hit your head and don't strain your neck.* If it is uncomfortable, slow down.



- ✓ Bruce has his head on one side and his legs are going over the opposite shoulder.

- ✓ As always end with power and control
- ✓ Be ready for the unexpected



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The Side Fall [introduction]

When learning Side falls start from the ground. Set the initial position then roll side to side slowly increasing the speed and intensity. As always keep you neck strong, hold your head off the mat surface.

- ✓ Starting on your left side roll slowly onto your left side



- ✓ Keep your head off the mat



- ✓ Control your legs and arms



- ✓ Make contact with your right arm, bottom or your left foot and the side or your right leg

- ✓ Roll back to your left side again and repeat the process



- ✓ Cover your face with your free hand to ward off any attempted strikes

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The Side Fall [Crouching]

The side fall is one option that can be used when you are not able to roll. I believe you should roll first and breakfall when rolling is not an option.



- ✓ Hands start in the ready position
- ✓ Starting in a crouch, Phil will push his leg out across his body to the opposite side and let his unbalance pull him the down.



- ✓ The arms are powerful yet relaxed.
- ✓ The motion should be fluid
- ✓ The final contact should be with the entire shoulder and arm in on slapping motion

- ✓ The angle of the arm is about 45 degrees from the trunk of the body
- ✓ The energy of the fall is absorbed over the largest surface area possible.



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The Side Fall [Standing]

This fall is a natural progression from crouching and many students find it easier than the crouching version. Remember *don't* land on your elbow. Spread the fall out over the largest surface area of your body that you can.

1



✓ Phil will slid his leg across his body to the opposite side and let the natural unbalance created pull him to the ground

2



3



✓ The upper thigh, side, shoulder and the full extension of the arm will take the energy of the fall

✓ Note the full extension and full surface area coverage.

4



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The Back Fall [Sitting]

This fall is an introduction to the concept of a break fall. We are attempting to “break” our fall. Our first choice of rolling is not available for some reason so we must absorb the energy of the fall in the safest way possible



- ✓ Brian keeps his back round
- ✓ His hands at the ready position
- ✓ Push off slightly with your feet to start the fall

- ✓ The back is still rounded
- ✓ Head is forward and well supported.
- ✓ Keep your chin on your chest to prevent having your snap back to hit the floor



- ✓ The energy of the fall is taken up with a full slap on the floor with both of Brian’s arms.
- ✓ The arms are fully extended and at a comfortable angle from the shoulders
- ✓ ***Notice: Brian’s head is well off the mat. Never let your head hit the mat***



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The Back Fall [Crouching]

This fall looks almost identical to the previous fall but I find it a good practice when new students a first learning. The backward speed is faster and the potential for your head striking the mat or snapping your neck back is increased.



- ✓ The back is still rounded
- ✓ Head is forward and well supported.
- ✓ Keep your chin on your chest to prevent having your snap back to hit the floor
- ✓ The energy of the fall is taken up with a full slap on the floor with both of Brian's arms.
- ✓ The arms are fully extended and at a comfortable angle from the shoulders
- ✓ Control your legs. If they go to high you will hit your head. If they are too low you will hit flat on your back

- ✓ Brian keeps his back round
- ✓ Keep your back rounded
- ✓ Lean back slightly to start the fall



Notice:
Brian's head is well off the mat. Never let your head hit the mat



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The Back Fall [Standing]

This fall is a natural progression from crouching and many students find it easier than the crouching version. Remember *control you fall speed* at the beginning. Keep your back rounded. Spread the fall out over your shoulders and arms. Keep your chin on your chest so your head does not snap back and hit the floor.



3
✓ Rounded back and chin on his chest

2
✓ Rounded back

1
✓ Ready position



✓ Control the force on your shoulders with your leg position.

✓ Back rounded, head forward

✓ Spread the impact out over the shoulders, arms and hands



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The Front Fall [Kneeling]

There are many times when you will be thrown to the floor on your front. It is important that you absorb the energy of the fall with your hands, forearms and feet (knees when kneeling). You don't want your body to bounce on the floor and have the wind knocked out. Also remember to turn your face to the side. Be relaxed but ***attack the mats***.

- ✓ Hands in the ready position, relax and fall forward.
- ✓ As you approach the floor attack with both forearms and slap the mat
- ✓ If you wait until you make contact with the mats before you attack it will be too late. The force of your fall will allow center core of your body to bounce off the mats



- ✓ Attacking the mats.
- ✓ Center core or body trunk is still protected from the floor.



- ✓ Remember to keep your face turned to the side and breath out as you make initial contact with your arms

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Some General thoughts:

- *Never hold your breath when hitting the mats. Always breath out on impact.*
- Falling in the dojo is designed to keep you safe and prevent injury while you and your partners learn self defense techniques.
- Understanding the fine points of falling and rolling is a primary building block in learning more advanced techniques.
- Falling down outside on the grass or the road is different !!!!!
- More advanced breakfalls tend to be from higher heights and with fewer control points. You are assuming more responsibility for your own fall.
- Breakfalls should be practiced at the beginning of **EVERY** class.
- Generally, if possible roll as a first choice and breakfall as a last resort to protect yourself from injury (particularly outside).
- Once you are comfortable falling, you will be able to take responsibility for your own safe falls after being thrown by a training partner.
- When training with a partner always relax and allow the throw but do not jump for your partner. This behavior will give a false sense of technical ability to the “Tori” (person throwing). In addition you may jump one direction and your partner may throw in the opposite direction causing you significant injury.

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I hope this document has been of value to you and will give you some ideas about the *basic rolls and falls* available in your training.

- ✓ In the next document you will find
- ✓ *Intermediate and Advanced* training drills.
- ✓ The most common falls from a variety of attacks



*Sensei
Paul Fox*

- ✓ Group break fall training drills
- ✓ Outdoor training drills
- ✓ And more !!!!

Thanks for your interest

Visit the web page for the most up-to-date information available.
Feel free to email me if you have questions

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