

POLICE TACTICS & TECHNIQUES

Handcuffing Suspects



Background

UN Police personnel may have to resort to the use of handcuffs to secure suspects either on arrest for transport or as a temporary measure to control the individual and prevent harm or injury to themselves or others.

Whatever the reason, the UN police officer must be confident that they have a legal right to restrain the individual before continuing, whether that authority is granted by law or through the Mandate of the Mission.

Dangerous or violent suspects should be handcuffed to ensure that they do not become a risk to themselves, the police officers or other members of the public.

The way to proceed to this handcuffing depends of the situation and the assessed risks. This is assessed by the Police Officer responsible for the mission. Where a suspect is known to be dangerous and acts violently and aggressively, it is best to handcuff him once they have been directed into the prone position on the ground. Of course, in the case of a cooperative and obedient suspect, the handcuffing can be conducted standing. The environment should also be taken into consideration in such a case, in order to avoid aggravating a situation. For instance, handcuffing a suspect on prone position in sight of journalists is likely to be perceived as an unjustified violence and humiliating treatment and be reported as such. Judgement and common sense should apply.

Handcuffed suspects should always be searched prior to transportation. Although they are handcuffed, they may still access weapons that will assist them to escape from custody or harm individuals or themselves. This aspect is also important since a suspect falls under Police Officers' responsibility and protection, as soon as he is under their custody, even from self-inflicted injuries.

There are a number of different types of handcuff available to police officers; this lesson is designed around the 'loose' styles linked by a chain, although the techniques could mostly be used with fixed or rigid handcuffs as well.

Aim

To familiarize the FPU members with good practices in safely handcuffing a suspect:

- in standing position
- in kneeling position
- against a wall
- on the ground

Learning outcomes

On completion of this module the participants will be able to:

1. Explain the legal framework of using force and in particular of handcuffing a suspect
2. Safely handcuff a standing suspect
3. Safely handcuff a kneeling suspect
4. Safely handcuff a suspect against a wall
5. Safely handcuff a suspect on the ground

Training sequence

The material in this module is designed to be delivered over six 40 minute periods; the first being a theoretical lesson with PowerPoint presentation, the next four being practical lessons, where each of the individual techniques is demonstrated and practiced by the student. In the last lesson all elements will be practiced and the instructor will be able to assess the officers to ensure that they have learnt the techniques. This is based on the assumption that the students have received no previous training in this subject.

Duration

Minimum Session time	Lecture/Presentation	Question/Assessment	Session Activities
8 hours	40 mins	40 mins	6 hours 40 mins
Additional Options	Mission Specific	Optional film	Optional activity

Methodology

This module contains a basic PowerPoint presentation to explain and show the various techniques used in handcuffing suspects. However, the majority of this module should be taught in a practical manner using the format:

- Demonstration by the instructor
- Explanation by the instructor
- Imitation by the students (with instructor correcting where necessary)
- Practice by the students until the technique is perfected

At the end of the final stage the instructor will be able to assess if the student is competent in the technique having carried out continuous assessment throughout the preceding lessons.

The instructor should inform participants of the content, format and timing. Knowing what to expect, participants can improve their ability to focus on the subject and

benefit better from the session.

- Theory of handcuffing (40 minute classroom lesson)
- Handcuffing a standing suspect (2x40 minute practical lesson)
- Handcuffing a kneeling suspect (2x40 minute practical lesson)
- Handcuffing a suspect against the wall (2x40 minute practical lesson)
- Handcuffing a suspect on the ground (2x40 minute practical lesson)
- Revision and assessment of all the above techniques (40 minute practical lesson)

Instructors are encouraged to add practical examples and mission specific information related to the specific deployment of participants, if known.

Instructor Profile

This module is best presented by an instructor who has practical experience in handcuffing suspects in peacekeeping operations and who could share his/her experience with the group. They must be practiced and skilled to be able to demonstrate the technique correctly. If there is more than one instructor, at least one should have practical experience of handcuffing in either domestic policing or a peacekeeping mission.

Instructor Preparations

Required Readings

- DPKO Policy on Formed Police Units in United Nations Peacekeeping Operations
- FPU Training Handbook
- Basic Principles on the Use of Force and Firearms by Law Enforcement Officials

General Preparations

Equipment:

1. Computer and PowerPoint slides for lesson 1
2. Projector and Screen for lesson 1
3. Handcuffs for lessons
4. Ground sheets

Training Area:

The initial lesson plan should be carried out in the classroom. However, subsequent lessons will require a large open area where students can work in teams of three or four. Be advised students will require a wall to practice one of the handcuffing techniques.

Session notes

Lesson 1 – Theory

The legal framework:

The Interim Standard Operating Procedures, (SOP) on “Detention in the United Nations Peace operations”¹ provides a legal framework to the use of physical restraints, which is considered as “a use of force” with the attached conditions.

“Instruments of restraints can only be applied in the following circumstances:

- As a precaution against escape during a transfer or handover
- On medical grounds by direction of qualified United Nations medical personnel
- By order of the responsible Commanding Officer, if other methods of control fail, in order to prevent a prisoner from injuring himself or others or damaging properties.

Instruments of restraints shall never be used as punishment and shall not be applied for any longer time than strictly necessary”.

Only purpose-designed handcuffs or flexi-cuffs shall be used as restraints. All UN Staff likely to use restraints shall be trained in their proper use, in accordance with international standards.

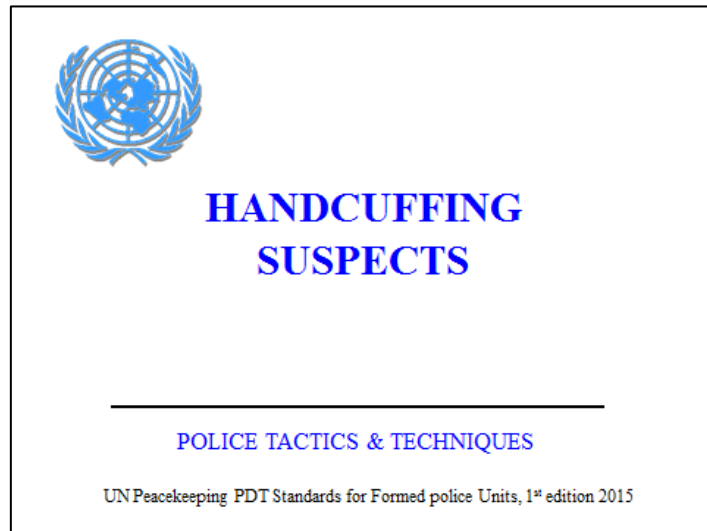
. Restraints may be removed to undertake ablutions.

Detained persons shall not be attached by use of restraints to a vehicle or any other object.”

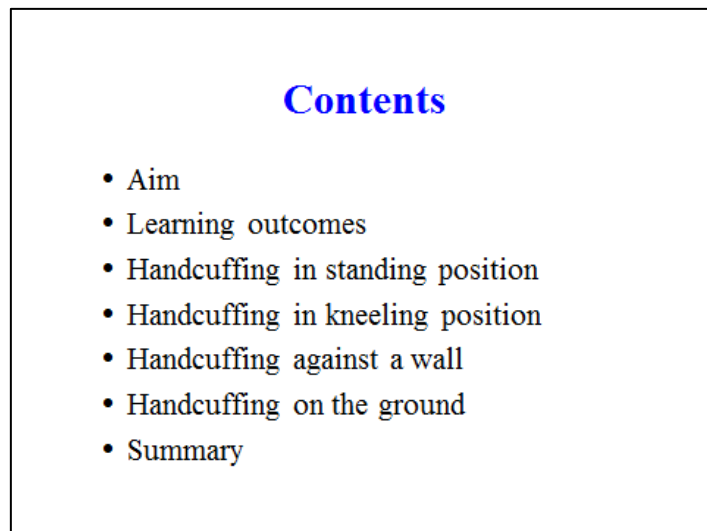
Contents:

- Handcuffing in the standing position
- Handcuffing in the kneeling position
- Handcuffing against a wall
- Handcuffing on the ground
- Sitting a handcuffed person

- Handcuffing Suspects



Slide 1



Slide 2

Aim

To teach the FPU member how to safely handcuff a suspect:

- In standing position
- In kneeling position
- Against a wall
- On the ground

Slide 3

Learning outcomes

At the end of the lesson the participants will be able to safely handcuff a suspect:

- In standing position
- In kneeling position
- Against a wall
- On the ground

Slide 4

Handcuffing a suspect is a safety measure and can only be done if it is justified in law or under the guidance on use of force. Officers should be reminded of this fact at the start of the lesson.

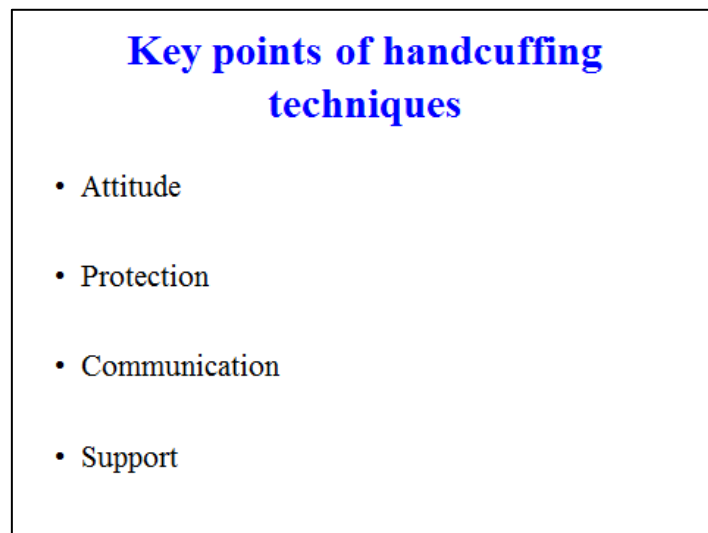
Applying handcuffs too tight or too loose can lead to pain, injury and possible restriction of blood flow, it may also be considered as abuse or torture. Officers should ensure the proper application of the handcuffs to avoid unreasonable injury.

Handcuffs that are too loose will not properly secure the suspect and may result in escape and possibly cause harm or injury to others. Loose handcuffs are also difficult to control the suspect with; they can slip or be pulled from the officer's hand before they are fully applied and then used as a weapon against them. Therefore, officers must ensure that the handcuff is tight enough to secure the suspect without

causing pain or suffering.

Once the handcuffs have been secured they should be double locked as this ensures that they cannot further tighten when the suspect moves. Although this may prove difficult with a non-compliant suspect officers should always endeavour to do so unless it will compromise safety. It is also necessary to periodically check the handcuffs in the event of a prolonged detention, such as during transport.

☞ **Instructors note:** This can be linked in to STM “Human rights and the use of force” it is also useful to discuss these issues with the class. If they are experienced police officers, it may be useful that some of them can give examples of where incorrect use of handcuffs has caused a problem for them as domestic police officers. This can be used to reinforce the points and the instructor should use this to illustrate that the same problems will occur in a peacekeeping mission.



Slide 5

1- Attitude

The handcuffing officer should always approach a suspect from the side in the active guard position in order to assist with balance as well as provide the opportunity to counter any movements by the suspect. While approaching the suspect, he must be ready to react or withdraw if it is not safe to remain in the intimate (red) zone. The officer must be constantly aware of the suspect's movements in case they become hostile.

The handcuffing officer must maintain contact with the suspect while searching, with this we strongly recommend two points of contact be maintained. The handcuffs must be firmly held in the strong hand and if possible (loaded/ready) with the strong hand holding both loops around the central chain. Both openings must be in the same direction.

2- Protection

The second officer provides protection to the handcuffing officer, this protection is mainly focused on the suspect himself but it can also encompass other elements of the surrounding environment. An angle of 130 degrees should be kept between the two officers in order to allow good vision of the suspect. According to the potential level of threat, the protection officer may have to constantly adjust his situational awareness in regards to his weapon. In this regard, it appears that many FPU officers are only equipped with long barrel rifles. In such case, the weapon will be slung over the officers shoulders. This technique is utilized to ensure proper placement of the weapon while handcuffing. In case of a higher level of threat, the protection officer may have to step back a little and hold his rifle in low ready position, barrel pointed toward the ground but in the general direction of the suspect in order to be able to shift quickly to high ready position.

☞ **Instructors note:** Instructor should demonstrate the correct way of holding the handcuffs at this point

3- Communication

Both officers must maintain permanent visual contact and the handcuffing officer should inform the protection officer visually, by voice or by signs of any movement felt from the suspect or the discovery of weapon. The handcuffing officer should also maintain verbal contact with the suspect if he is compliant so that the second officer is aware of what is happening.


4- Support

There should always be two officers for one suspect in order to provide adequate and immediate support in the event the suspect resists or demonstrates aggression to the handcuffing officer. Officers must adopt the 130 degree positioning and constantly evaluate their position in order to prevent the potential for cross fire and environmental awareness.

- Handcuffing in standing position

Handcuffing in standing position

- Adopt 130 degrees position
- Lateral approach and active guard position
- The control officer becomes the protection officer and moves laterally to avoid crossfire
- Initially control the suspect (shoulder-elbow control with 2 points of contact)
- Slide your hand down to the wrist and preload the handcuffs



Slide 6

This technique should only be used for compliant suspects. The control officer initially explains to the suspect that an officer will approach to apply handcuffs. The handcuffing officer approaches the suspect from the side, in the active guard position. He takes control of the suspect with his hand on the suspect's elbow and the officer's elbow on the back of the suspect by the shoulder blade. This locks the suspects elbow and makes any violent movement toward the officer more difficult. The Handcuffing officer now becomes the Control officer. The handcuffing officer now moves his hand down the arm to the suspect's wrist keeping his forearm against the elbow to restrict the suspect's movement.

Handcuffing in standing position

- Clear wrist, bring arm to you
- Apply lower cuff
- Adjust handcuffs with the other hand



Slide 7

The officer must check that clothing will not become caught in the handcuff when it is applied, this will be done by raising the cuff out of the way with the weak hand. The

strong hand then applies the lower loop of the handcuff, with a sudden pressure which should snap the handcuff around the wrist. The officer should use the weak hand if necessary to tighten the handcuff further (if required). The handcuff should be tight enough to apply pressure on the wrist by lateral movement, if this becomes necessary.

☞ **Instructors note:** Students must be reminded that use of pressure with the handcuff on the suspect should only be used if they become resistant or violent.

Handcuffing in standing position

- Lift elbow and manipulate arm towards the rear
- Change your stance to allow continuation of the movement
- Maintain the control



Slide 8

The handcuffing officer must then lift the suspect's elbow and move the handcuffed wrist to the suspects lower back so that the other loop of the handcuff passes between the handcuffed arm and suspect's body. This needs to be done in a smooth rapid movement; the officer changes to the opposite guard position, so that he can bring his weak hand over, to control the suspect's elbow while keeping a firm grip on the handcuffed hand. Throughout this procedure the officer should be careful to avoid a head strike.

Handcuffing in standing position

- Lift the arm for better control
- Secure the shoulder with weak hand
- Slide down the arm
- Secure the wrist
- Bring the arm towards you to apply second cuff




Slide 9

The officer is now in control of the suspect and can slide the hand controlling the shoulder down the arm to the palm, bringing the wrist into position for the second cuff to be applied.

Handcuffing in standing position

- Apply second cuff
- Search the small of the back (if the search was already done. If not, perform complete search)
- The protection officer takes care of the environment
- *During this procedure be aware of potential head strike from suspect*




Slide 10

Once the handcuffs are secured, the suspect should be searched, if this has not already been done. In particular, the officer should check around the waist belt and the small of the back to ensure that the suspect has nothing that he can use to release the handcuffs. The handcuffs should be checked with the suspect at this stage and double locked by the officer. Where appropriate the keyholes of the handcuffs should always be facing the officer if possible as this will make it far more difficult for the suspect to use items to 'pick' the lock.

- Handcuffing in kneeling position

Handcuffing in kneeling position

- When the suspect is potentially dangerous or high risk situation
- Direct the suspect to show his palms and to go on his knees
- Maintain clear communication (suspect and police officer)



Slide 11

Suspects, who are dangerous or potentially dangerous, should be handcuffed in the kneeling or prone position, as they can be more easily controlled. It is also more difficult for them to resist or attack the officers.

Once the officers have initially identified themselves as armed UN police, they should tell the suspect to stand still, with his palms to the front, so that the officers can see that he is not holding any weapon.

The suspect should then be told to kneel down, keeping his arms out to the side with the palms open.

At this point, the officers should be in the safe zone (green) with a distance between the suspect and themselves.

They should conduct a good visual search of the suspect to see if there are any obvious weapons, or bulges in their clothing where a weapon could be concealed.

The Control officer should tell the suspect to place his hands on the top of his head, and if possible with the fingers interlaced.

The hand should be visible on the top of the head and not behind it, in case he has a concealed weapon down the neck of his shirt or jacket as this would allow him to access it and use it on the handcuffing officer before it could be seen.

It does not matter if the suspect leans back on their legs or sits erect, either way he is in an 'off balance' position which can be easily controlled.

Handcuffing in kneeling position

- Tell to suspect to put hands on his head
- It is recommended to interlock fingers
- Failure to comply requires adaptability
- Maintain triangular
- Communication
- Environmental scan



Slide 12

The officers now move to the 130° position keeping visual contact and the handcuffing officer becomes the control officer moving to the rear of the suspect.

The protection officer continues to cover the suspect with his weapon while the handcuffing officer securely holsters or cross-body slings his weapon, and prepares his handcuffs.


As previously mentioned, in case the officers are using long barrel weapons, it should be held in low ready position, making sure the end of the barrel remains out of reach of the suspect, requiring the officer to step back a little.

At this point the protection officer must warn the handcuffing officer of any suspicious movement from the suspect, so that, if necessary, the handcuffing officer can retreat, re-draw his weapon and the two officers can regain verbal control of the suspect.

🔗 **Instructors note:** At this point students should be reminded that it is safer for the officers to control the suspect from a distance than for the handcuffing officer to attempt to wrestle the suspect to the ground and disarm them.

Handcuffing in kneeling position

- Approach with caution
- Holster weapon
- Preload the handcuffs prior to physical contact
- Secure suspect's fingers
- Maintain active guard position and distance



Slide 13

The handcuffing officer now approaches the suspect and takes control of the fingers of both hands on the top of the head; this will secure the suspects hands and make it very difficult for them to move and free his arms.

The officer remains in the active guard position and ready to react if necessary.

The handcuffs should be correctly gripped in the strong hand and the lower cuff loop applied to the wrist.

The protection officer must constantly adjust his position so that he is at 130° and avoids the chance of cross fire, should the suspect become violent and the control officer have to retreat prior to securing the handcuffs.

Handcuffing in kneeling position

- Apply lower cuff
- Utilize weak hand to complete cuffing procedure if necessary
- Change your stance to allow continuation of the movement
- Manipulate arm towards the rear
- Maintain the control with another suspect's hand




Slide 14

Maintaining control of the suspect's free hand on the top of his head will provide

additional control, adapt to the situation and when ready the second step will commence by using the weak hand to complete the cuffing procedure. Extending the handcuffed arm to the side is necessary to prepare it for the manipulation to the rear of the suspects back.

Handcuffing in kneeling position

- Tell the suspect to bring the second hand to his back
- Adapt your position while following the movement and keep control of suspect's second hand
- Apply pressure on suspect's fingers to guide the second hand to the back



Slide 15

Officer must then lift the suspect's elbow and change the stance. Then he moves the handcuffed wrist to the back of the suspect so that the other loop of the handcuff passes between the handcuffed arm and suspect's body.

Throughout this procedure the officer should be careful to avoid a head strike. Control the suspect's left shoulder at this point while preparing to slide your hand down his left arm and grasp his wrist.

Handcuffing in kneeling position

- Apply second cuff
- Search the small of the back
- The protection officer takes care of the environment
- *During this procedure be aware of potential head strike from suspect*



Slide 16

The suspect's left hand is then controlled and guided by the officer into position at

the small of the back for the second loop to be applied.


The cuffs are adjusted and locked after which, the officer checks the waistband and back, to ensure there are no weapons or tools that the suspect can use to 'pick' the lock.

The suspect can then be moved into the standing or prone position for searching, if this has not already been done.

- Handcuffing against a wall

Handcuffing against a wall

- Lateral approach
- Active guard position
- Initially control the suspect (shoulder-elbow control)
- Slide your hand up to the wrist and preload the handcuffs
- Protection officer is straight behind the suspect



Slide 17

Handcuffing a suspect against a wall provides more control and a higher degree of safety for the officers. This method is recommended when the situation dictates and the environment permits this method.

The officer should position himself in the active guard position, with his weak hand securing the suspects' elbow against the wall.

To ensure proper placement or that 130 degree angle we encourage the protection officer during this procedure to stand directly behind the suspect for greater protection from crossfire and a quick reaction if the situation requires it.

Handcuffing against a wall

- Pull the hand away from the wall (clear suspect's wrist)
- Bring the suspect's hand lower
- Apply lower cuff
- Adjust handcuffs with the other hand




Slide 18

The suspect's wrist should be cleared of clothing and lowered down and slightly away from the wall, so that the handcuff can be applied, this prevents the officer from reaching up and putting himself off balance.

Like in previous techniques; lower cuff will be applied. Officer should use the weak hand if necessary to tighten the handcuff further (if required). The handcuff should now be tight enough to apply pressure on the wrist by lateral movement, if this becomes necessary.

Handcuffing against a wall

- Lift elbow and manipulate arm towards the rear
- Change your stance to allow continuation of the movement
- Maintain the control




Slide 19

The handcuffing officer must then lift the suspect's elbow and the handcuffed wrist to the back of the suspect so that the other loop of the handcuff passes between the handcuffed arm and suspect's body. The officer is changing his guard.

Handcuffing against a wall

- Secure the suspect against the wall
- Protection officer moves to avoid crossfire
- Maintain the control
- Secure the shoulder with weak hand
- Added control by pressing your knee against the suspect's leg
- Slide down the arm
- Secure the wrist
- Bring the arm towards you to apply second cuff




Slide 20

The suspect is told to move flat against the wall, so that the officer has better control. This can be enhanced by pressing with the knee against the legs. The officer uses his elbow to control the suspect against the wall. The protection officer ensures the 130° angle is maintained. In case the suspect resists, the officer can lift the handcuffs to apply pressure to the suspects' arm and wrist.

Handcuffing against a wall

- Apply second cuff
- Search the small of the back
- The protection officer takes care of the environment
- *During this procedure be aware of potential head strike from suspect*



Slide 21

The officer then brings the suspect's other hand down to the small of the back for the second loop of the handcuff to be applied. The handcuffing officer will search the small of the back when suspect is still flat against the wall. The suspect can now be pulled away from the wall and either searched in the standing or prone position, if this has not already been done. Once the suspect is secured, the protection officer can keep the environment under control, or assist with the transportation of the suspect.



Slide 22

In the event that you wish to place a suspect on the ground for searching, the officer must tell him that he is going to sit down and partially support his weight while he is lowered to a sitting position. At this point, the suspect can be easily transitioned into the prone position and a full search in the prone can then be conducted.

☞ **Instructors note:** It is essential that the handcuffs are double locked before this technique is attempted, as the handcuffs will tighten with the movement of the suspect if they are not.




Slide 23

If a suspect was in kneeling or prone position and intention is to stand him up, the officer must tell him that he is going to stand him up, will guide him and partially will support his weight while performing the movement.

- Handcuffing on the ground

Handcuffing on the ground

- When the suspect is potentially dangerous or a high risk situation
- Direct the suspect to show his palms and to go to his knees
- Maintain clear communication (suspect and police officer)




Slide 24

Handcuffing on the ground is a technique to be used on dangerous or potentially dangerous suspects. Officers make their approach from the front of the suspect, remaining at a safe distance within the Observation zone. Advices the suspect to stand still with his arms out to the side with his palms toward the officers so that they can ensure no weapon are being carried. The officers should carry out a visual search at this point. **Tell the suspect to kneel down, arms out palms to the front.**

Handcuffing on the ground

- Order the suspect to lay down
- Suspect's arm are extended
- Communication
- Environmental scan
- Maintain triangular (protection officer in front)
- Intervention officer approach laterally with caution
- Holster weapon



Slide 25

Then order the suspect to lie down extending the arms out to the side. Communication may be a factor so adapt and get the suspect to the ground as soon as possible and facing the control officer.

Handcuffing on the ground

- Weak hand controls suspect's wrist
- Strong hand control suspect's elbow
- Simultaneously approach with rotation of the suspect's arm to get into position of control




Slide 26

The protection officer keeps the suspect under close observation. The handcuffing officer approaches the suspect having holstered or secured his weapon. The officer takes suspect wrist with his weak hand and adds his strong hand to the elbow for better control. **The goal is to control the suspect's hand to prevent him from rolling.**

Handcuffing on the ground

- Secure arm between knees (position of control)
- Knees tight for suspect's control
- Preload the handcuffs
- Clear suspect's wrist
- Apply lower cuff
- Adjust handcuffs with the other hand



Slide 27

At this time the officer is initiating the rotation of suspect's arm and stepping in placing his knees on the suspect's back establishing a point of control holding the suspects' arm between the legs in a tight arm lock.

The officer then prepares and applies the first handcuff while maintaining control of the suspects arm in such a manner that the handcuff locks on the back of the suspect's wrist.

Handcuffing on the ground

- Bring the second arm towards you to apply second cuff
- Apply second cuff
- Adjust handcuffs with the other hand
- Search the small of the back
- The protection officer takes care of the environment



Slide 28

The officer then orders the suspect to bring his other arm back behind him where the second loop of the handcuff is then applied. When done correctly, this should be accomplished in a manner that leaves the suspect's hands in a palm outwards position.

☞ **Instructors note:** It is important that the officer balances on his legs and does not kneel on the suspects back as this may exert pressure on the lungs which can lead to positional asphyxia, (especially if this handcuffing comes after an intense run or fight and the suspect is "out of breath. It could kill him!!!).

The handcuffs should then be double locked and the suspect searched.

Summary

A suspect can be handcuffed in the following positions:

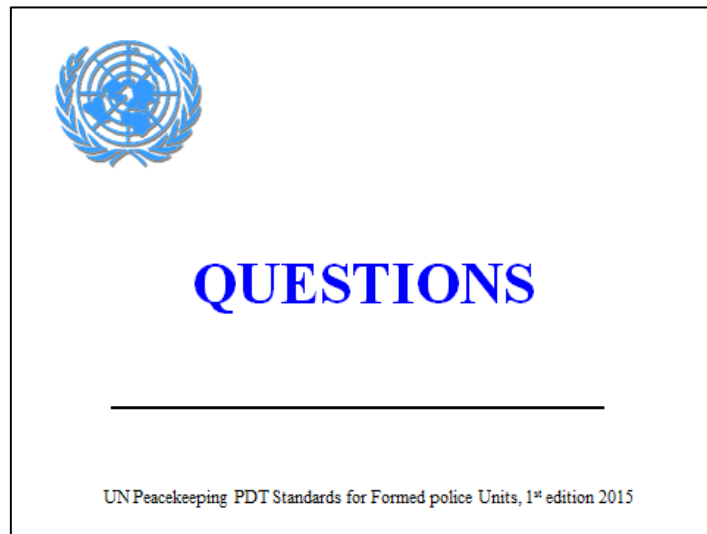
- In standing position
- In kneeling position
- Against a wall
- On the ground

Slide 29

☞ **Instructors note:** When faced with handcuffing suspects who are in vehicles, the suspects should be ordered out of the vehicles one at a time and handcuffed utilizing

one of the techniques described in this lesson. Whether this is accomplished using the standing, kneeling, or prone position is dependent upon factors such as the threat level presented by the suspect and environmental conditions. (For further information relating to the stopping of vehicles and removal of the suspects, refer to the lesson plan 'Vehicle Control'.

☞ **Instructors note:** The officers should be given a summary of the key points of the lesson before being asked if they have any questions



Slide 30

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Lesson 2 – Practice

The remaining practical lessons are for mastering of the Handcuffing skills by the students and are left at the discretion of the instructors when they have assessed the level of knowledge of the students.

This practice should be taught in a practical manner using the format:

- Demonstration by the instructor
- Explanation by the instructor
- Imitation by the students (with instructor correcting where necessary)
- Practice by the students until the technique is perfected