

Safeguarding in Martial Arts: Safe Practice

Martial Arts are activities where safe practice is essential to help prevent injury. *Children are particularly vulnerable as they are still developing mentally and physically, so training methods need to be modified as described below. (*also includes Adults at Risk)

1. Before the lesson

The floor will be swept and inspected before the start of the class to remove anything that may cause injury.

2. Warm up

All activities should first include a thorough warm up, this includes articulation of all the joints *and* head to toe stretching and gradual cardiovascular activity. To help prevent injury, specific attention should be paid to those muscle groups that will be used during later activity.

No growing child will be expected to do push ups on knuckles.

All warm up activity will be closely monitored and be adjusted according to the student's needs and abilities.

3. Karate Practice

The JKA policy "Expectation of an Instructor states": "apportion time equally to Kihon, Kata and Kumite with occasional reference to self defense"

Kihon – Basics

The risks include: damage to the joints through poor technique, injury when performing against strike pads

Safe practice must include: include:

- (a) Performing the technique slowly until proper form is achieved, adding speed only when appropriate.
- (b) Introduction of strike pads will be done only after a reasonable competence level is achieved
- (c) Striking pads will be done initially without power, and gradually increase as deemed appropriate. Softer pads are provided for younger students.

Kata (set forms)

The risks include: injury through improper use of technique, injury through collision with others, or running out of room

Safe practice must include:

- (a) teaching the techniques used before teaching the kata.
- (b) Student's start points to be away from other students, and far enough into the room.

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- (c) Relative positions of the students to be monitored during the kata to minimize collisions

Kumite (sparring).

The risks are: concussion (brain injury) from heavy blows to the head; damage to internal organs and joints from heavy blows; injury from inappropriate stretching and other exercises. Damage to limbs through excessive blocking.

Safe practice must include:

- (a) Strict discipline will be expected during all forms of sparring. The instructor will only continue with the full attention of all present.
- (b) Sparring will be introduced gradually, and build in complexity as the student progresses. So initial 5 step sparring will be performed with a safe distance between the opponents, and only bring them into range once it is clear they all understand the concept of how to block.
- (c) Light contact only, especially to the head. (Light contact means the technique is targeted but controlled so that whilst the opponent is touched the technique is not followed through).

After the lesson.

Any child being picked up after the lesson must remain in the dojo until their parent/guardian arrives to take them home. It is expected that the parent/guardian will make every effort to arrive on time.

Special Note Concussion:

Any student who may have been concussed, either in training or outside the dojo, will need either a note from their GP allowing them to practice karate or have been free of any sign of concussion for at least 28 days before they can do any partner work.

Above all, safe practice means having a suitably qualified and experienced instructor who will ensure that children are not exposed to the above risks and who can make a training session enjoyable whilst maintaining the discipline essential to learning a Martial Art.