

Introduction to Karate-Do

Karate has been increasing in popularity during the past thirty years, but there have been some misinterpretations of what Karate and Karate-do really is. Karate has been confused with kick-boxing, point tournaments, board breaking and recently with acting.

If Karate is practiced for the purpose of fighting, then it becomes only a physical art. In contrast, **Karate-Do** training begins with the patient and repetitious practice of the basic techniques which have been perfected over a long period of study and actual use. To make any effective use of these techniques, the spiritual aspect of this art of self-defense must be recognized and play the dominant role. It is mandatory that the traditionalist follow and understand the path of **Karate-Do** and train with the proper attitude to set an example for others to follow.

The ideal technique for every traditional karateka is to perform Ikken Hisatsu (one punch death blow), because in the pre-tournament days, one mistake meant death on the battlefield or on the streets. Even the practitioners-of-old placed stronger emphasis on the spiritual aspect than on physical techniques. Karate-Do during practice includes both body and spirit; every technique is performed **with sincerity**. In actual use, there is no hesitation when attacking head-on; there is no thought about personal injury. In self-defense, it is not enough to fight with all of one's power; the true objective is to remain calm and do so with control for the sake of justice. Control also means with full impact, if necessary. Four tournament kumite purposes, a savage display of strength and power (sometimes confused with spirit) is undesirable because in **Karage-Do** one should treat an opponent with courtesy and respect. Never underestimate your opponent's ability, however. Attack with all your strength and spirit, controlling your mind and stopping your techniques just short of contact.

Gichin Funakoshi emphasized that the primary purpose in practicing Karate-Do is the nurturing of a spirit of humility. With this in mind, one must develop, through rigorous training, the power sufficient to defeat your adversary. To be a true practitioner of Karate-Do, one must attain perfection in these two aspects, the spiritual and physical.

The sport Karate of today places too much emphasis on winning at all costs, which – on behalf of the athlete – demonstrates a lack of good character. On the same note, learning several katas at the same time for examinations or tournaments also displays a lack of spiritual training. This results in the student being incapable of performing an effective technique or kata which is the unique characteristic of Karate-Do. The desire to learn tournament techniques or “tournament katas” to earn more points is counterproductive; this leads to a lack of patience and seriousness necessary to learn the basics correctly. Therefore, before attempting to learn a higher level kata, the earlier kata must first be mastered in ascending order. This type of training builds character. It shows that the student has patience and wants perfection before attempting something more difficult. Karate tournaments are a good barometer to test one's ability but they must be held under suitable and controlled conditions with the proper attitude.

The impatient student who begins kumite or advanced katas prematurely will eventually be overtaken by the patient student who was trained correctly in the basic techniques. In Karate-Do, haste makes waste. There is no easy way – no secrets, no shortcuts – only hard training. Work hard for your goals and you will appreciate your accomplishments even more.

There are no elevators in Karate-Do, only stairs.