

## **Taking up Karate – EKC Guide to Novices and Parents**

### **What is Karate?**

Karate is a Martial Art which was originally developed in Japan as a form of self-defence and self-discipline.

It is practised enjoyably and safely by millions of people throughout the world. It offers many benefits including fitness and self-confidence but also is a positive force for society as its code of conduct and emphasis on etiquette actively promote both respect, and non-violent and responsible behaviour. It is practiced by people of all ages and abilities and is easily adaptable for those with disabilities. The nature and structure of Karate allows different genders and age groups to train together and it is not unusual to see parents and children training together.

Traditional Karate training involves the practice of basic techniques, set routines and sparring, known in Japanese as Kihon, Kata and Kumite. There are different styles of Karate but they all follow these basic principles.

Karate has become well established in the UK since it was first introduced in the 1950's and has been accepted by the Educational Boards as an activity for GCSE and A level in PE since 1999

There is also a vibrant National and International competition aspect of Karate in which British Karate has excelled over the years

### **How do you choose a club?**

It is important that the right choice of club is made by new starters as standards vary widely; as in every industry, Karate has its share of 'Rogue Traders', instructors who make false claims as to their qualifications and charge highly excessive fees for very poor quality instruction. The English Karate Council has produced this guide to help new starters make a more informed decision by explaining briefly the traditional Karate training, grading and pricing structures.

### **What equipment is required?**

The word 'karate' translates as 'empty hand', and no special equipment is required other than suitable clothing. The suitable clothing for practising karate is a 'Gi' – a white trouser-suit which has been developed to withstand and accommodate the particular rigours and movement requirements of karate training. The jacket is fastened in a traditional manner outside the trousers with a long belt called an Obi, and the colour of the Obi marks the grade or level of proficiency of the student / practitioner. New students may train in a tracksuit, loose clothing or gym kit, but will be expected to acquire and wear a Gi once they decide to commit to the study of karate.

### **How is progress measured?**

Novices will traditionally wear a white belt and can then earn the right through regular and diligent training to be examined for different coloured belts and eventually for their Black Belt. These pre-Black belt examinations are known as 'Kyu' gradings and are usually taken at three to four month intervals, with training required at least twice per week for one to two hours at a time. The Kyu grade indicates the level of proficiency a student has reached, with the highest Kyu grade/number representing the lowest proficiency; systems customarily start at 9<sup>th</sup> or 8<sup>th</sup> Kyu for the first grading.

Not all karate styles follow the same Kyu colour progression, but students at 1<sup>st</sup> Kyu grade - the final Kyu grade before Black Belt – will usually wear a brown belt.

### **Achieving a Black Belt**

Most members of the public recognise that a Black Belt in Karate has achieved a high level of skill. There are traditionally ten levels of black belt, known as 'Dans'; 1<sup>st</sup> Dan is the first level and takes around a minimum of three years of regular training to achieve.

Minimum periods of training and learning are required in order to attain the next level of Black Belt. 1<sup>st</sup> to 2<sup>nd</sup> Dan will take a minimum of two years training, 2<sup>nd</sup> to 3<sup>rd</sup> three years etc; a 5<sup>rd</sup> Dan will therefore have been training for about 20 years, but usually much longer.

### **Instructors**

Karate instructors are usually a minimum of 1<sup>st</sup> Dan and over 18 years of age, though those below these criteria may be appointed as assistants.

### **Training and Grading Costs**

Costs of training will vary depending on factors such as location, hall hire costs and club structure – some clubs for example are run on a non-profit basis whilst others are run on a professional basis. Classes would typically cost £3 - £6 for 1 to 2 hours training; in addition clubs may charge an annual or a one-off joining fee. There may also be a licence fee payable to an association to which the club belongs and this should provide appropriate insurance and access to other association facilities.

Kyu gradings would typically cost £10 - £20. Dan gradings will cost more and can be checked on association websites.

Gis and belts can be purchased through a club, from retailers or through websites and the costs will depend on source and quality but should be relatively inexpensive for beginners (starting prices currently around £20-£30).

### **Safety and Welfare**

The EKC has adopted the Sport and Recreation Alliance Codes of Good Governance and all EKC associations are encouraging their clubs to work to these codes to ensure that they offer a professional service to their members in ancillary areas such as equity, equality, student/practitioner welfare, health and safety etc. All EKC clubs will be required to have in place suitable insurance for their members, instructors, officers and volunteers. A kitemark for clubs (Karatemark) is being developed to offer assurance that minimum technical and governance standards have been met and a list of the information likely to be requested from clubs aiming for this kitemark is available on [www.englishkaratecouncil.com](http://www.englishkaratecouncil.com).

### **Further Information**

Any further enquiries can be addressed to: [enquiries@englishkaratecouncil.com](mailto:enquiries@englishkaratecouncil.com).

## **Club Checklist**

EKC consider that the following items should be easily accessible to all members / prospective members of a club (typically on a website or in an introductory brochure which a club might circulate upon enquiry):

- Name of club and name of National Association/Federation(s) to which club belongs
- Name of International Association/Federation(s) to which club belongs
- Brief history of club
- Name, grade and a brief history of club Chief Instructor
- Structure of club – eg; non-profit making/private
- Club membership, training and grading fees
- Grading frequency

- and the following documents:

Appropriate Insurance (Member to Member/Public Liability)

Child and Vulnerable Adult Policy

Equity Policy

Health and Safety Policy

Grading syllabus