

BEGINNERS GUIDE

The Black Tiger Karate Club welcomes junior and adult beginners from 5 - 75 years.

Our syllabus is designed so that no previous level of fitness is required to join in.

This guide is designed to answer the most frequently asked questions from beginners. This information is part of the Black Tiger Karate Club members' guide which is given to students by the club instructor (Sensei) on enrollment.

What is Karate?

Karate is a system of self defence and physical culture originally developed and refined in Okinawa and Japan. The word is formed from the Japanese words **Kara** (meaning empty) and **Te** (meaning hand), symbolising that its practitioners - known as Karateka - are unarmed, but use hands, arms, legs, and feet as striking weapons.

What is Shotokan Karate?

There are several fundamental styles of Karate which all conform to the above definition, but use slightly different training methods and place varying degrees of emphasis on issues such as the speed, strength, and range of techniques - thus you will hear some described as 'fast' styles, and others as 'strong'. Shotokan is a style of Karate which emphasises a balanced development of all these aspects, taught within a system which instills confidence and self-control. The Shotokan style was originated by an Okinawan teacher of physical education, Gichin Funakoshi, who introduced it to Japan in 1922, where it was developed extensively by the Japanese Master, Masatoshi Nakayama. Because of this development there have been relatively few changes since then, and Shotokan has spread to become the most widely practiced style of Karate throughout the world.

Can Anyone Practice Karate?

Karate can be practiced by men, women, and children. Our students range from the very young to senior citizens. Anyone who is in reasonable health can train at Karate. Karate students will improve their self-awareness, self-confidence, and self-esteem, as well as their fitness. Parents and teachers continually report on the improvement in the behaviour of children who train regularly at karate. This is because of the emphasis placed upon good manners and discipline.

Who Will Teach Me?

The club is under the instruction of qualified instructors who are provided with the opportunity to attend specialist courses designed to improve their instruction skills in areas such as first-aid, club administration, coaching (for all levels and ages), nutrition, anatomy, and flexibility.

What Will Training Involve?

Your training will be structured into three main sections - Kihon, Kata, and Kumite (basic techniques, set combinations of techniques, and sparring). Each section has a range of complexity to suit the different levels of grades of students.

Kumite will be introduced to you as basic blocking and counter-attacking, but will ultimately lead you to free-style fighting, where you will be taught to attack with, and defend against, unannounced attacks.

Will I Be Able to Take Part in Competitions?

Karate is an exciting and challenging sport. There are regional and national events for all ages and grades, with opportunities for selection to the squad.

What Benefits Are There in Practicing Karate?

The hard physical training required to reach a high-level of skill in Karate promote overall good health, fitness, and well-being. The concentration, commitment and dedication required, help build a strong, confident, and determined character. There is a 'Dojo Kun', or training code, which not only ensures a disciplined training environment, but serves as a tool for molding behaviour, so that a true Karateka will fight with words and only employ physical violence as a last resort, with obvious benefits to society.

How Do I Measure My Progress?

Students are entitled to take grading examinations after set periods of training. These gradings are conducted by senior examiners, and there is a grading syllabus for all levels. Coloured belts are used to denote grades. There are 9 grades, known as Kyu, below black belt, with 9th Kyu, orange belt, being the lowest grade. Belt colours vary between clubs and styles but the colours that we use are as follows :- Beginners wear white belts, followed by orange, red, yellow, green, purple, purple with white stripe, brown, brown with white stripe, and brown with stripe again. There 10 levels of black belt, or Dan grades, with 1st Dan being the lowest.

How Long Will It Take Me To Achieve My Black Belt?

Students can achieve 1st Dan standard in 4 to 5 years, with regular and correct training. A 5th Dan will have at least 20 years of experience and dedication.

How Much Will It Cost?

Karate is a reasonably inexpensive pursuit. The Dojo fee of £3 is low compared to many other sports and hobbies. The main equipment needed is a white karate suit (called a Gi) and a licence. Other equipment, such as sparring mitts can be purchased in time but are not essential.

What is a Dojo?

'Dojo' is the Japanese word used for 'training hall'. Its literal translation is 'place of the way'.

Dojo Etiquette

- Always try to arrive in good time for the lesson.
- When you enter or leave the dojo (training hall) you should bow
- Always address the instructor as "Sensei" whilst in the dojo, never by name.
- If you arrive late for class you should:

Change quickly and quietly – without disrupting the rest of the class
Warm up outside the class (failure to warm up because you are late can lead to injury)

On entering the dojo, kneel so the Instructor can see you and wait for the signal to join in

When the Sensei gives you the signal to join the class, bow and move quickly to your place in line.

- "Oss" is a Japanese word used in the dojo as a sign of respect to the Sensei or fellow students. "Oss" is also used to confirm understanding.
- Karate Gi's should be kept clean, washed, pressed and in good condition.
- On entering the dojo, you should be properly dressed in your Karate-Gi – with belt (obi) already tied.
- Students (Karate-Ka) should act with appropriate respect and discipline in the dojo.
- Finger and toenails must be kept short to prevent injury. Long hair should be tied back, so that it does not obscure vision.
- All jewellery/watches should be removed prior to training – if jewellery cannot be removed, it should be covered with surgical tape or plaster.

What is a sensei?

A Sensei is traditionally an instructor of 1st Dan (Black Belt) or above. Senior instructors are known as Shihan and these are 5th Dan and above.

INSIDE THE DOJO

Why do we bow?

The bow is a sign of respect towards the Sensei, the club and its history and to fellow students

Lining Up

At the start of each lesson, students line-up in grade order. The most senior student starts the line at the right hand end of the Dojo, and the other grades line up in between with the beginners at the other end of the Dojo.

Senior Students

Senior students (Brown Belts) are referred to as 'Sempai'. They may be asked by the karate instructor to assist during a lesson.

Japanese Terms commonly heard in the Dojo

A sheet giving the English translations to Japanese Terms commonly heard in the Dojo is available from SENSEI or can be downloaded from the web site.

What happens inside a karate class?

The lesson begins with a line-up and kneeling Rei (bow) to the Sensei (instructor). This is followed by a warm-up session to avoid injury or strain and develop flexibility.

As part of the syllabus for each Kyu (level), the Karate-Ka (karate student) will practice the following techniques in a karate class:

KIHON – 'Basics'

Consisting of blocks, punches, strikes, kicks, stances and positions.

KATA – 'Forms'

A formal sequence of moves designed to defend against several attackers.

KUMITE – 'Sparring'

There are several levels of sparring used in the syllabus, ranging from basic sparring (Kihon Kumite), to semi-freestyle (Jiyu Ippon Kumite) and freestyle sparring (Jiyu Kumite).

As part of the development of good technique, the students will learn about correct breathing techniques, muscle tension, targeting, distance and control. This is practiced individually, with a partner or against focus mitts.

At the end of the lesson, the students return to the line, kneel and perform Mokuso (breathing exercises to relax the body and empty the mind). A kneeling Rei (bow) is given to the Sensei. On the Sensei's instruction, the students then stand and Rei (bow).

THE KARATE GRADING

What you can expect

At the Karate grading you will be expected to demonstrate to the grading examiner the Kihon, Kata and Kumite syllabus for the belt you are attempting.

There is a normal grading requirement of 24 lessons for adults and juniors.











When they are held

Belt gradings are held every three months; typically they are held on the last Friday of the month. Your club instructor will be able to confirm the dates.

THE BELT SYSTEM

Kyu Levels

The belt system works from white belt (beginner) to black belt.

BELT / OBI	
10 th Kyu	White
9 th Kyu	Orange 
8 th Kyu	Red 
7 th Kyu	Yellow 
6 th Kyu	Green 
5 th Kyu	Purple 
4 th Kyu	Purple / white stripe 
3 rd Kyu	Brown 
2 nd Kyu	Brown / white stripe 
1 st Kyu	Brown / 2 white stripe 
Shodan	Black 

Another belt (Red / White stripe) has now been introduced for students under 7 years of age who are unable to remember the necessary KATA for orange belt.