

Safe Practice Policy

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Introduction

Safe practice is essential to help prevent injury when training.

Children (and vulnerable adults) are particularly vulnerable as they are still developing mentally and physically, so training methods need to be modified as described below.

1. Warm Up

All activities should first include a thorough warm up, with head to toe mobile or static stretching and gradual cardiovascular activity. To help reduce injury, specific attention should be paid to those muscle groups that will be used during later activity.

2. Strikes, Punches and Kicks

The risks include:

- Concussion, vertigo and other head injuries
- Damage to joints
- Damage to internal organs
- Injury from inappropriate stretching and other exercises

Safe practice must include:

- A. Observing the following restrictions during sparring:
 - No head contact for juniors (-13yrs) allowed below 6th Kyu during free sparring (kumite)
 - Light head contact allowed for juniors from 6th Kyu onwards. (Light contact means the technique is targeted but controlled so that whilst the opponent is touched the technique is not followed through)

- Hand mitts, shin and foot guards, mouth guards and groin/chest guards must be worn at all times below 3rd Kyu Note: Expert advice from a neurosurgeon is that the use of helmets, mitts or foot pads does not eliminate the risk of brain injury from full contact strikes
- During free sparring, partners are matched in regard to height and weight where possible, and ensure allowances are made by the stronger party where this is not possible
- Junior students will not free spar with adult students. Sparring with advanced grade adults will occur as an instruction tool or as part of a grading
- Juniors will only spar within grade appropriate groups. These are; beginner, beginner/intermediate, intermediate, intermediate/advanced, advanced
- For tournament sparring gender, age, height and weight will be split as required
- For sparring in class genders will not be split unless specifically requested by a student

B. Children's joints are still developing and can be damaged by excessive stretching, conditioning exercise and impact. Therefore:

- Stretching in class is not forced
- Push-ups on knuckles: minimum grade: 6th Kyu, no minimum age
- Body conditioning drills: minimum grade 6th Kyu, no minimum age
- Strikes to kick shields and focus pads: under supervision: no minimum grade or age

3. Sweeps, Takedowns, Throwing, Grappling, Strangles and Chokes

The risks include:

- Falling on unsuitable surfaces
- Landing on the head
- Damage to the joints
- Loss of consciousness

Safe practice must include:

C. Observing the following restrictions:

- Sweeps and takedowns, strangles and chokes: minimum grade for juniors 6th kyu, no minimum age. No restriction for adults
- Throwing and grappling: minimum grade 3rd Kyu, no minimum age
- Checking the matted area for suitability, particularly where the mats have been joined
- Checking around the matted area for sharp/hard objects
- Ensuring the practice area has enough space for the number of students training, and that there is a safe distance between training partners
- Having an experienced instructor who will ensure practice is undertaken safely
- During free sparring, partners are matched in regard to height and weight where possible, and ensure allowances are made by the stronger party where this is not possible.

- Junior students will not free spar with adults. Sparring with adults will only occur with advanced grades and as an instruction tool or as part of a grading
- Juniors will only spar within grade appropriate groups; beginner, beginner/intermediate, intermediate, intermediate/advanced, advanced
- For tournament sparring genders will be split as required
- For sparring in class genders will not be split unless specifically requested by a student

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

4. Monitoring

The policy will be reviewed one year after development and then every three years, or in the following circumstances:

- Changes in legislation and/or government guidance
- As required by the UK Sport and/or Home Country Sports Councils
- As a result of any other significant change or event

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