



New Student Guide

Japan Karate Association of Albany

Bethlehem YMCA
900 Delaware Avenue
Delmar, New York 12254

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Welcome to the Japan Karate Association (JKA) of Albany

As with any new endeavor, karate for the new student may seem very confusing. This packet contains a basic introduction to karate-do (the way of karate), proper etiquette, philosophy, and terminology.

Karate-do is more than a sport; it is a martial art for the development of character and physical ability through training. An empty-handed art of self-defense with ancient roots in many Asian countries, Karate has been developed and refined into many styles.

Japan Karate Association (JKA) of Albany teaches Shotokan karate, the most popular Japanese style as developed by Gichin Funakoshi. Shotokan is practiced by more than ten million people around the world. JKA of Albany is a member of the Japan Karate Association World Federation and the Shotokan Karate-Do International.

Dojo Etiquette

Japanese etiquette is followed in the dojo (training area or school). The basic rules are as follows:

1. Bow as you enter and leave the dojo; this is an expression of courtesy and respect.
2. Bow to the Sensei (Teacher) as he enters the dojo. Your teacher is addressed as Sensei during class. Black belt instructors or assistants to the instructor are addressed as **Sempai** (Senior).
3. Follow the formal opening and closing ceremony. Class generally begins with the command to "line up." Students line up in front of and facing the Sensei with more advanced students to the right¹. Class ends in the same fashion. Topic is addressed in more detail in a separate section.
4. No talking is allowed during a class. If you understand an instruction, reply with the Japanese word, "**hai**" (means "yes" or "OK"). If you have a question or do not understand the instructions or command, raise your hand.
5. During class, no lounging or leaning against walls is permitted.

¹ Formally, it's furthest from the entrance to the training area. For the Delmar YMCA, it is to the right facing the door



6. Movement, such as yawning, scratching or looking around is not permitted. Students must stand only:
 - a. In an informal attention stance known as "**heisoku-dachi**" — feet together, arms relaxed, hands lightly touching the outside thighs, with eyes focused straight ahead;
 - b. Or, a ready stance known as "**hachiji-dachi**" — feet apart at a shoulder width, hands in a tight fist in front of your hips with eyes focused straight ahead, until you are told to relax or to shake out or stretch your muscles.
7. Do not leave the training area during class without requesting permission to do so.
8. After completing the introductory classes for new students, all students must wear a traditional white uniform known as a **gi**. When adjusting the gi, a student must face the rear of the dojo.
9. Training is conducted with bare feet.
10. No jewelry or other ornamentation may be worn during class. JKA emblem is allowed on the **gi**. Headbands are not allowed unless needed. If needed, they should be white only. Protective pads may not be worn except to protect an injury.
11. Always be on time for class. It is suggested that a student arrive 15 minutes before the start of class. If a student comes late because of some unavoidable circumstance, he must "saiza" (kneel) at the entrance of the practice floor until the instructor gives him permission to join the class. Time is needed to wash the dojo floor before training begins.
12. Smoking is not allowed in the dojo. Food is also not allowed in the dojo. Towels, articles of clothing, shoes, etc., are not permitted on the dojo floor.



Formal Opening and Closing Ceremony

On the command, "line up," students form a line shoulder to shoulder, highest in rank to the right, lowest in rank to the left. Sensei faces the front of the dojo with his back to the class (facing the likeness of Sensei G. Funikoshi). The highest ranking student gives the command, "saiza," which means assume the formal sitting position. All students kneel and sit back on their heels with their backs straight, knees apart approximately the distance of two fists touching the knee of those students on either side. Students' hands with fingers closed rest on their thighs with their eyes straight ahead. With the command, "mokuso" (clear your mind), students must close their eyes and meditate for a few moments to empty their mind of the day's activities and prepare for learning. The next command, "yame" (stop), signals the students to open their eyes.

The senior student will then command, "shomen ni rei" which means to the front bow and all students bow in unison. Sensei will then turn and face the class. The senior student will command, "Sensei ni rei," at which time Sensei and students bow to each other. The class then stands, ready for class to begin.

At the end of class, "line up," "saiza," "mokuso," and "yame" are commanded just as in the beginning of class. The senior student recites the "dojo kun" which all students repeat. The dojo kun are the five principles that all students strive for.

Dojo Kun (School Principles)

Seek perfection of character
Be faithful
Endeavor
Respect others
Refrain from violent behavior

The senior student will then command, "shomen ni rei" and "Sensei ni rei" as in the beginning of class. All students then say, "Thank you Sensei," at which time the Sensei will rise and leave the practice area. At this point, class is officially over and students stand and leave the dojo floor in order of rank.



Promotions and Ranking

A person begins karate training by taking special instruction for a period of about one month. During this time, loose clothing such as sweat pants or shorts and t-shirt is the suggested attire. After learning the basic stances, blocks, punches, and kicks, the student then joins the regular class. At that time, the student must wear a gi with a white belt.

Kyu testing is the method by which a student advances in rank. Kyu testing is normally administered every three months — in March, June, September, and December. Dan or black belt testing is conducted twice a year — July and December.

Ranking Table

Kyu (Class) ranks ²		Children Kyu	Dan (Black Belt) ranks	
8th	White Belt	Yellow	1st	Shodan
7th		Orange	2nd	Nidan
6th	Green Belt	Green	3rd	Sandan
5th		Blue	4th	Yodan
4th		Purple	5th	Godan
3rd	Brown Belt	Brown	6th	Rokudan
2nd			7th	Nanadan
1st			8th	Hachidan
			9th	Kudan
			10th	Judan

² Children may be awarded colored belts for each Kyu accomplished: (white, yellow, orange, green, blue, purple, and brown).



Glossary of Basic Terms and Techniques

Age uke — rising block
Choku zuki — straight punch
Chudan — chest area
Dojo — training hall
Embussen — performance line
Empi — elbow
Empi uchi — elbow strike
Fudo dachi — rooted stance
Fumikomi — stamping kick
Gedan — lower area of body
Gedan barai — downward block
Gi — practice uniform
Gyaku zuki — reverse punch
Hachiji dachi — open leg "ready" stance
Haishu — back-hand
Haishu uchi — back-hand strike
Haito — ridge-hand
Haito uchi — ridge-hand strike
Hajime — command to begin
Hengetsu dachi — half-moon stance
Hanmi — half-front facing posture
Heisoku dachi — informal attention stance
Hidari — left
Ikken hissatsu — "to kill with one blow"
Ippon — one point
Jodan — upper level
Juji uke — X block
Jyu kumite — free-style sparring
Kakiwake uke — wedge block
Kamae - posture
Karate — empty-hand fighting
Kata — forms or formal exercise
Keage — snap kick
Kekomi — thrust kick
Ken — fist
Kentsui — hammer fist



Kiai — focused shout
Kiba dachi — straddle-leg stance
Kihon kumite — basic sparring
Kime — focus (finish)
Kokutsu dachi — back stance
Koshi — ball of foot
Kumite — sparring
Mae geri — front kick
Makiwara — punching board
Mate — wait/turn
Mawashi geri — roundhouse kick
Migi — right
Mikazuki geri — crescent kick
Morote uke — augmented forearm block
Musubi dachi — informal attention stance (feet turned out)
Neko ashi dachi — cat stance
Nukite — spear hand
Oi zuki — lunge punch
Sanchin dachi — hour-glass stance
Sensei — teacher
Sempi — senior student
Shiai — contest
Shizen tai — natural stance
Shuto — knife-hand
Shuto uchi — knife-hand strike
Shuto uke — knife-hand block
Sochin Dachi — diagonal straddle-leg stance
Sokuto — edge of foot
Sun dome — arresting a technique
Tanden — lower stomach, center of gravity
Uchi — strike
Uchi uke — block inside outward
Ude — forearm
Uraken — back-fist
Uraken uchi — back-fist strike
Ushiro — back
Ushiro geri — back kick
Waza-ari — half point
Yame — stop



Yoko — side

Yoko geri — side kick

Yoko geri keage — side snap kick

Yoko geri kekomi — side thrust kick

Yori-ashi — sliding the feet

Zanshin — state of relaxed alertness

Zenkutsu dachi — forward stance

Zuki - punch