

Taking up Karate – Karate England (KE) 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 actively promotes respect and non-violent and responsible behaviour.

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 is now accepted by the Educational Boards as an activity for GCSE and A level in PE.

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 and grading structures.

What equipment is required

Karate is practiced in a white suit called a Gi. The jacket is fastened with a belt called an Obi and the colour of the obi marks the grade or level of proficiency.

How is progress measured

Novices will traditionally wear a white belt and can then earn the right to examine for different coloured belts. These 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 highest kyu number indicates the lowest grades. 1st kyu, the final grade before black belt, is usually a brown 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; 1st 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. 1st to 2nd Dan will take a minimum of two years training, 2nd to 3rd three years etc; a 5th Dan will therefore have been training for about 20 years, but usually much longer.

Instructors

Karate instructors are usually a minimum of 1st 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 locations, 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; clubs may charge an annual or a one-off joining fee. There may also be a licence fee payable to the association 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.

Suits 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.

Safety and Welfare

The KE has adopted the Sport and Recreation Alliance Codes of Good Governance and all KE 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, student welfare, health and safety etc. All KE 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 requested from clubs questions is available on www.karateengland.com

Further Information

New students should feel free to enquire about all the above from the instructor and ask to see appropriate documents such as insurance certificates and CRB disclosures

Any further enquiries can be addressed to: admin@karateengland.com

Club Checklist:

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 sight of following documents:

Insurance

Child and Vulnerable Adult Policy

Equity Policy

Health and Safety Policy

Grading syllabus