



**GKR**  
KARATE



## SECTION 6: Further guides to teaching

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## 6.1 Introduction

Our aim in this manual is not to go through example after example of what to teach, but to give the instructor a teaching guide. The following section will give you some guidelines, ideas and hints to do with teaching areas such as One-step sparring and self defence combinations. For further instructional guidance and many examples, you should review the Instructional Video.

## 6.2 One Step Sparring (Yakusoku Kumite)

One Step sparring is designed to develop a student's confidence, awareness and ability in free sparring (Jyu Kumite). It helps a karate-ka develop distance and timing, which are two of the most important ingredients in sparring. For beginners, it can help to show them the effectiveness of each of the techniques they are learning. One-step sparring shows the beginner how each block is executed, and helps to reinforce the mechanics and dynamics of the basic techniques.

One Step sparring can be done in both traditional form and stances, or more free style form and short fighting stances.

There are various types of one-step sparring exercises, ranging from simple beginner style exercises right through to more involved, advanced exercises.

### 'Toe to Toe' One-step sparring

The students face each other standing in Heiko-dachi. One side punches to head, body and groin level, while their partner practises blocking. There are many variations to this exercise. Use simple forms for beginners learning how to block, and build the techniques up to a more advanced level for higher grades (refer to above video).

### 'Stance' One-step sparring

The students start off in long forward stance (vary this exercise with both right and left leg front stance). Again, the idea is to have each student moving forward and back into stance, attacking and blocking in turns. There are a variety of exercises you can use with this form of one-step sparring.

### 'Sanbon' Kumite

This is a traditional form of one-step sparring. It combines moving in sanchin and shiko-dachi stances, and involves working on angles as well as moving in stance forwards and backwards. It is derived from the Goju system of Karate.

## 6.3 Instruction Notes: Self Defence Training

If at any stage of teaching you want to run through self defence techniques, it is imperative that you have full understanding of what you are about to teach. There are, as in any part of the training system, rules and guidelines that must be adhered to. This is especially true for self defence combinations, where the element of danger can be greatly enhanced by the type of techniques you are teaching your class. Under all circumstances, you need to be absolutely positive that what you are teaching is endorsed by GKR. If in any doubt, please ask your Senior Instructor before you teach it.

When teaching self defence combinations, be aware of the following objectives:

1. Must be effective.
2. Must be simple to use (for all age groups, male and female).
3. Must be, where possible, non-strength based.

When teaching self defence techniques, the following points must be met at all times:

### It is done safely

Be sure to only include safe combinations in your routine. Such things as defending against knife and gun attacks should not be practised in the dojo, as they can lead to a false sense of security. Students should be first taught to stay away from danger, and where appropriate, to use their common sense, and not their karate skill. To be on the safe side, only teach combinations that you have been shown and taught by your instructor, or any Senior Instructor in GKR.

Anyone who acts dangerously or causes mischief should not continue in the class. Your goal is to have a safe training environment in your dojo at all times.

Teach students that they should at no point take a technique to the point where they are inflicting pain on their partner.

Make sure you are not partnering with a student. Instead be sure to supervise the class.

**Keep it simple**

Make sure the techniques you are running through are simple to learn and apply. There’s no point in teaching our students complicated self defence manoeuvres that are hard to remember, and hard to execute. Remember, this is not the main focus of karate training with GKR. Therefore, any self defence that we teach needs to be simple to use for all ages, male and female. Even if remembered, complicated methods are less likely to be effective.

**Make students aware of other areas to attack (apart from basic areas)**

Hair	pulling
Face	striking/scratching/slap can be effective
Ears	clapping into ears is effective /pulling
Groin	striking/ grabbing
Shins	striking/dragging heel of shoe down the front
Feet	stamping on feet and/or toes even through shoes can cause pain
Rib skin	when grabbed, pinching tiny amount and squeezing and twisting causes enormous pain
Under the nose	Not a strike as this can result in serious injury; but by putting the thumb or finger above the top lip and applying pressure upwards to the nose will move even the strongest person.

**6.4 Helping Students to Improve**

There are occasions during the course of a student’s karate training career where they may feel like their growth has stagnated. Many students actually fall into a hole and drop out of training. The main reason for this is that they feel they can’t get any better. They lose confidence in themselves, and end up talking themselves into quitting.

As far as you can see, they are training hard and improving according to their level of ability. Their training and progress is on track. It comes down to the student feeling like they are not improving.

It is in your best interest as their instructor (and role model) to watch out for signs of stagnation. Some students will not say anything. They will just fall into this emotional state, lose confidence, lose motivation, and drop out. We can help to catch these students in the process if we aim to praise and encourage all of our students during each class. Some students will be quite open to talk to you about their progress. They will quite often come up to you and say “Sensei, I feel like I’m not getting any better”.

So in this section, we need to deal with the topic of students who feel like they are not improving.

Karate is an endless pursuit. It is about continual improvement, both physically and mentally. The Japanese word for this is ‘Kizen’. When a student is seeing improvement in their training, their confidence stays in tact. Occasionally, a student may appear to stagnate in their physical improvement. This may go on for weeks, even months. Inevitably this leads to a drop in confidence and their motivation towards their training also suffers.

***“Persistence prevails when all else fails.”***

If you feel a student is progressing, but they do not, then perhaps they are not getting enough feedback and encouragement on their progress. Feedback is critical. Give your students feedback on such things as ...

- Where they are improving, and what they are really happy with.
- Where they need to improve and ways to improve.
- Setting grading goals and monitoring their progress.

People enjoy getting feedback on their progress. In many cases, that alone will help them stay motivated and on track with their training. They just need to know that you feel that they’re doing really well!

***“The definition of frustration is doing the same thing over and over and expecting a different result.”***

The next area to cover is where both the sensei and the student feel the student is not improving.

In this case, improvement is only a decision away. The challenge is simply the student's desire to want to improve. These situations can often be solved with some clear one-on-one communication from the instructor and plenty of focus, monitoring and encouragement.

#### **Step 1**

Talk to the student about what your goals are for them.

*“John I want to see you in your blue belt in the next 2 months.”*

#### **Step 2**

Get feedback

*“John how do you feel about that”* John answers. *“Great.”*

#### **Step 3**

Make them aware of what's holding them back.

*“At this point, John, I need you to be putting in more effort to show me you want it. A blue belt doesn't just come easy. You have to earn it.”*

#### **Step 4**

Re-inforce your confidence in them.

*“When you try, you are great! We need to get you to try more often and you'll improve out of sight”* or *“when you concentrate, you are great...”*

#### **Step 5**

Get an answer.

*“Can you do that, John”* answer *“Yes”*.

#### **Step 6**

Let them know you are going to monitor their progress.

*“John, I'm going to remind you every time I see you slackening off, because I want you to succeed.”*

#### **Step 7**

Praise progress. When you praise someone they always try harder to get more praise.

## **There are four levels to karate training**

### **1. Unconscious Incompetence**

This is where they are doing techniques wrong but don't know it This is the first stage to karate training and everyone goes through it.

### **2. Conscious Incompetence**

This is where the student thinks about what they are doing but still struggles to get it right. A student gets to this level only when they become aware they are doing it wrong.

### **3. Conscious Competence**

This is where the student is competent with the technique but only when they are thinking (focused) about it. You must develop this stage before moving on to the last stage.

### **4. Unconscious Competence**

This is where you are competent in your technique and don't even need to think about it. A skilled karate-ka will most likely be at this stage for most of what they do in their karate.

The mistake too many students can make is that they think they are at a stage of 'unconscious competence' long before they actually reach it. Their auto-pilot kicks in whenever they train thus turning all their mistakes into 'hard to break' habits!

To become a good karate-ka, Kancho Sullivan says, “Wherever you are, be there”. In other words, the mind shouldn't be wandering. Students should be thinking about what they are doing on every technique.

Here are some pointers to help students who put in the effort and pay attention, but feel they are not improving.

#### **Step 1**

Re-inforce your confidence and faith in them. Also re-motivate them with their main goals.

#### **Step 2**

Set a goal for their next grading. Make it realistic.

#### **Step 3**

Get them to a seminar. Seminars are excellent ways for students to get specialised training. Seminars also help to re-motivate a student.

#### Step 4

Set out a plan for them to achieve their goal. (e.g. homework for certain techniques in kata which need to improve before their next class).

#### Step 5

Teach them how to develop their technique. For example, doing a kata over and over may not be the answer. They need to break it down, and practise each technique over and over, slow until correct, then pick up the pace until they are doing it fast.

#### Step 6

Give them plenty of feedback, encouragement and praise all progress.

#### Step 7

Ask them to train more. Students who increase their training to two nights will double their ability to improve! You may even suggest they train at both classes on the same night.

- They are not sure as to whether or not they are on track.
- It is not written down; making it more of a wish than a goal.
- It is too long term, and they cannot visualise achieving the goal.

***In karate our goal is to help people achieve their goals. Therefore the biggest key to help motivate our students is to set a clear goal that the two of you (instructor and student) can work towards.***

## 6.5 Setting Goals With Your Students

### Why we set goals with our students

Goal setting is one of the most powerful forces known to mankind. People have achieved great things after setting down what it is they want to achieve.

A goal, in its purest form, is something that you desire. It should be something that is not easily attainable, yet something you are willing to work for.

***“The purpose of a goal is to entice you to become the person you need to become in order to achieve it.”***

Can you imagine playing football with no goal posts? It would be pretty dull. The same can apply in karate training.

Most, if not all students have a goal to reach their next grade, or get to black belt. However, these goals often aren't strong enough to motivate them to become the karate-ka they need to become in order to get there. So the question to ask is why not?

- They don't know if it is a realistic goal.

When an instructor writes down a goal for a student, or even talks to the student about them it immediately ...

- Lifts the student's confidence and self-belief.
- It motivates them. The goal is now their driving force.
- It builds faith in them that their hard training will pay off.
- Lets them know you have their best interests at heart.
- It builds their motivation and enthusiasm to start becoming a better karate-ka.

### How to set goals with your students

To achieve your best in karate, students should give themselves the best possible chance of reaching their potential. That includes having a game plan to overcome any obstacles that may stand in their way. One thing they need to do to really boost their chances of long-term success is knowing how to set goals!

Just like most things in life, there is a process in goal setting that needs to be adhered to. Otherwise, the formula will not work. Many students think they have set a goal, but simply wanting it and being able to list it in a sentence does not make it a real goal. There are 7 steps to goal setting, and each of them is an important part of the process.

## The 7 steps to goal setting

### 1. The Goal

Set the goal – and make sure it is written down! If the goal is not written down is not a goal, but merely a ‘wish-list’. The goal must be specific and well defined. It needs to be detailed. An example of this is “I want to improve my karate”... This is not specific enough; it’s too general. What part of your karate do you want to improve? Kata, Kumite, kicking, stretching? A better goal would be “I want to learn kata saifa”. This is a specific goal. Writing it in this way allows the mind to ‘focus’ on its achievement!

### 2. Set a Deadline

A goal is not a goal without a due date for it to be accomplished. Deadlines keep you accountable. Without a finish line, there is no end! Make sure your students have deadlines attached to all their goals.

### 3. Plan of Action (Steps)

Now that you know what the goal is, and a timeframe has been set, the next step is to write out a ‘plan of attack’. Again it must be carefully thought out and detailed. If the goal is to grade to the next level in 10 weeks, then a plan of attack might include increasing the number of classes from 2 to 3 per week. It may also involve talking to higher grades and getting some pointers on the kata that they will be grading on. It may even involve planning some home training specific to the objective.

### 4. People & Groups to Work With

Reaching any worthwhile goal can be tough. Attempting to reach it on our own is always going to be tougher than if we have other people work with you. Talk to your students like you are their coach. Ask them to talk to other higher grades for advice as well. Even have them talk to their family for extra support. It is important to let your students know that their goal is something that you both will work towards. Working with others keeps people accountable and motivated.

### 5. Skills and Knowledge

Firstly, outline the skills and knowledge your students currently have that will help them reach the goal. When starting out on any new journey, they’ve got to know where they are starting. Then, list the skills and knowledge they will have to seek out and learn in order to help them reach their goal. In most cases reaching a goal, especially a demanding goal that is going to stretch them,

will require that they learn new skills and even go outside their ‘comfort’ zone. Learning a ‘new’ kata for their next grade is a good example of having to learn new skills go beyond their comfort zone.

### 6. Obstacles

With any goal, there are bound to be some detours on the road to its achievement. As part of the plan, you (and your students) should identify any obstacles that may get in their way and plan to overcome them! For example, an obstacle may be a 2-week holiday their family has planned. If they have 10 weeks to reach the goal, a 2-week break in the middle could affect the outcome. Identifying this will now help plan for that time away.

### 7. Benefits

This is the exciting one. This is when they get to list what is in it for them! How will they feel when they reach the goal? Perhaps they have set themselves a reward, like buying a heavyweight gi. Finally, they should tick the goal and write across this page “GOAL ACHIEVED”!

Points to note on goal setting with students are:

- The goal is to entice your student to train more, and train harder. If they are not; remind them that they are falling behind in their goal.
- Give students plenty of feedback on their training so they know which areas to work on most.
- Encourage your students to order their belts in advance. They can keep these



in their training bag at all times to help keep them motivated (be sure to not send out the wrong signal here. It is a goal setting mechanism, not a gesture of over-confidence).

- Never send a student to grading just because their goal is due. They must be ready to pass.
- Always set realistic goals.
- Both the Instructor and student should agree on the goal.
- Goal setting should always be done in a positive way.
- Always encourage students to approach you with questions on their progress.
- Students don't have to limit themselves to setting one goal at a time.
- Goal setting may be used like stepping stones, jumping from the achievement of one to the next.
- If a goal is ever missed, don't panic. Re-assess it, re-set it, and go for it again. Teach your students to know that missing some goals is ok. In fact, sometimes missing a goal makes you even more determined to get it next time.

***“You will never hit 100% of the goals you set, but I can guarantee one thing for sure, you will always miss 100% of the goals you don't set!”***

## 6.6 The Psychology of Stretching

### The Sensei

The first step to providing safer and better stretching and exercise programs is a willingness to change. Just because an instructor has been doing a similar class for a long time doesn't mean they can't be improved. Just by controlling the degree of repetitions, speed of movement, sequences of and cueing of the stretching, an instructor plays an important part in each student's health and development.

### The student

Every person's body is different in terms of strength, fitness, skill, co-ordination, weight and flexibility. Some may be more prone to injury than others due to anatomy, body structure, other physiological factors or their past medical history. Often the individual (let alone the instructor) is unaware of these factors so it is very important that as instructors, we take responsibility for the health of our students and make sure to only practise safe stretching.

### The Goal

The primary goal of stretching and exercising is to improve health, fitness, self-esteem and a sense of accomplishment. Anyone leaving a dojo with a sore back, knees or ankles etc will have a hard time feeling these things.

### Why Stretch?

- To prevent injuries. Stretching improves the range of movement for muscles. Furthermore, our muscles become more relaxed after stretching.
- Increased extensibility of muscles as increased range of movement allows for greater speed and power as there is less resistance.
- Improved co-ordination between muscle groups.
- Decreased muscle tightening, stiffness and soreness after exercise.

### Important points for stretching

1. Always breath slowly, deeply and evenly while stretching.
2. Do not stretch to the point where breathing becomes strained.
3. Not only breath properly, but concentrate on relaxing your muscles involved in the stretch.
4. Hold stretches in a comfortable position, tension should subside as the stretch is held.
5. Never over stretch. You shouldn't be in pain when stretching. You can identify over stretching by a feeling of pain which grows the longer the stretch is held. Also vibrating or quivering muscles are symptoms of over stretching.

6. Always warm up properly before doing any serious stretching. You should not stretch while the muscles are cold.
7. Don't ever bounce when stretching!
8. Don't expect to start where you left off last class. Every day the body is different.
9. Static stretches should be held for 15 to 30 seconds. Lightly at first then with more intensity.
10. Flexibility is good for health and is recommended 3 or more times per week.
11. Pregnant women should take stretching lightly. During pregnancy hormones are released which soften ligaments (to make carrying an infant in the pelvis more extensible) This can cause joint problems or pain if they aren't aware while stretching.

## 6.7 Types of Stretching

### Static stretching

Often known as passive stretching. This involves stretching a muscle where it is held in position for 15 –30 seconds. Each muscle should be done twice, first a light stretch, then again, taking it just beyond the point of the easy stretch.

This is a safe stretching style. It can be used before or after an intensive workout, or when coming back from injury.

### Dynamic Stretching

Also called active stretching. This is the basic stretching we all do daily, by actively moving our muscles we are getting flexibility training to enable us to do what we do daily. For flexibility training with martial arts, constant moving of a muscle group with 6 or more repetitions to a point where it is felt but not painful (leg raises are a common form).

### Ballistic Stretching

This is also called bounce stretching where the muscle is taken beyond its range by bouncing. Studies have now shown this stretching should not be on anyone's program.

### PNF Stretching

*"Proprioceptive Neuromuscular Facilitation."*

This is a modern type of stretching that although takes more time, will produce the best results for

those who want to take their flexibility to the next level. PNF stretching involves static stretching followed by muscle resistance of the same muscle. The static stretch should never be over done, just a comfortable stretch for 10 seconds followed immediately by another 6 seconds of muscle resistance (the muscle contraction should never be explosive).

### Why over stretching is a waste of time

Over stretching doesn't work because muscles fibres contain sensory nerve endings called "spindles". The main function of spindles is to send messages back to the muscle. If the muscle is stretched too far the spindles send a message back to the muscle to contract thereby protecting it from a pull or tear. The faster and more aggressive the stretch the faster and more aggressive the muscle contraction reflex, and seeing muscles only stretch properly when relaxed it defeats the purpose of the exercise.

### Summary note to Instructor

We have given you some insight into stretching to allow you to better understand the nature of this important part of training. We don't spend large amounts of time on stretching in our format as extraordinary flexibility is not a requirement to good karate. However, as we spend so little time on this area, we need to make sure we utilise our time effectively and safely.

