

Beginning TaeKwonDo Training

When a student decides to embark in the study of TaeKwonDo he/she is making a commitment that will benefit them and everyone they come into contact with for the rest of their life. TaeKwonDo is a Martial Art that strives to develop the entire person such as body, character, spirit, self-control, self-confidence, and self-esteem.

There are a number of things that beginning students need to know and understand as they begin training in TaeKwonDo. The master and instructors have many years of experience both in the practice and instructing of TaeKwonDo, and know much better than the student when various techniques or forms should be taught. The instructor can also determine the level of the student's readiness to learn new things and will push him/her enough so that the training remains challenging and exciting, but not dangerous or impossible.

The belt rank and color, while of great concern to the beginning student, is not the reason for training. Over a period of time, if he/she trains hard with the goal of becoming a strong, more self-confident, self-controlled person, and becoming better today than yesterday, the rank will automatically follow. Those who train to become better physically and mentally will continue to advance. The purpose of training should not be how fast rank can be achieved, but rather self-improvement, quality of techniques, and enlightenment.

In the beginning, all things seem awkward and difficult to perform. There will be many distractions such as senior students performing more difficult techniques, and noise. The beginning student must concentrate and focus on improving their own techniques and abilities, and not become frustrated due to comparing their techniques with other students. Remember, the only judgment that I make is - are you better today than yesterday, and are you performing up to your own capabilities? I can determine each student's capability in a very short period of time. I can also determine what each student is capable of performing, and will push each student to achieve that which is within them even when they doubt themselves.

The beginning student should not expect the master or instructor to give detailed, theoretical explanations of each technique or application. TaeKwonDo is taught in a Zen-like manner. When the student has practiced a technique or combination enough, he/she will then understand it. Explanation to those who have not practiced enough are usually made in vain because they have not experienced the technique to understand the application, theory, reason, and execution. My master once told me that if you practice a technique or form sincerely and consistently over one thousand times, all of your questions regarding those techniques will be answered, and further discussion is unnecessary.

If students follow the master and instructor's directions, one day, each student will suddenly feel different. The student's techniques will look and feel better, and will resemble the instructor's. Each student will experience times when they feel they are not improving, or getting better. This is normal, but remember part of advancing is achieving goals. The reason students do not feel they are advancing is because they are becoming more critical of their own techniques, and thus have to move their goal higher. This is the TaeKwonDo way. On the other hand, breakthroughs occur as a function of continued training and an open mind to learning and understanding. A deeper understanding and appreciation of TaeKwonDo is the result. This is called enlightenment. For examples ask a senior ranking student of examples of their breakthroughs.

No one ever masters TaeKwonDo or any other Martial Art. No one ever becomes so good that they cannot improve. No one ever becomes so knowledgeable that they cannot learn from others, and no one ever becomes so tough they cannot be defeated. Therefore, TaeKwonDo becomes a lifetime endeavor for many students offering the benefit of good health, self-confidence, self-control, self-discipline, self-discovery, as well as many other benefits.

The beginning student needs to realize that the mind, body, and spirit should become one as a long term result of training and commitment. The student who only wants to train in the physical aspect of TaeKwonDo might become a fair competitor, but will never understand the true meaning of TaeKwonDo, nor will they achieve inner strength, inner peace, or self awareness. The physical part of TaeKwonDo alone can easily degenerate into violence. Mental development will control violence and make Martial Artists a responsible, respected member of society. Remember, we train to kick and punch to develop our bodies and to remain healthy. We train our mind to control our body and emotions. Good luck and good training.

Master Steinhauser