

# RULES OF THE DOJO



There are just a few basic, common rules to follow when studying most martial arts. Unfortunately, we frequently do not warn new members of many of these practices which we often take for granted, and expect them to "pick them up" with time. Often a beginning student is blissfully unaware of some of the social blunders he or she may unintentionally invoke while learning the system.

Below is a list of most of the rules that our dojo uses to maintain class discipline – it certainly won't hurt to review these at the initiation of your studies.

1. In order to advance in rank, you must demonstrate **satisfactory attendance**. Show up to class, and be prompt. (In some styles, if late, you must wait at attention at the edge of the class until invited to join in. Sensei Ivan lets you join in as soon as you show up.)
2. After your first month, try to procure a uniform. Keep your **uniform clean**, but NEVER wash your belt (also known as your "rank"). In the first days of Karate, all belts were white, but with time and use they turned dark, eventually becoming the "black belt".]
3. Keep your fingernails and toenails trimmed. Do not wear rings, watches, bracelets, earrings, or other jewelry that may scratch or cut other students, or snag on their uniform.
4. Learn to **tie your belt quickly** and neatly. As Sensei Bill says, "If you can tie your shoes, you should be able to properly tie your belt." If your uniform or belt starts to come loose in class, kneel down on your LEFT knee (right knee UP) facing AWAY from Sensei, and retie it. DO NOT wear your belt outside of the dojo - when leaving the dojo for the day, remove your belt. Never wear your belt around your neck, or drop it on the floor. NEVER LEAVE YOUR BELT LYING ON THE FLOOR!! Any tags should ideally be removed from the belt. (Be aware that in American Kenpo Karate, belts knots are worn on the left or the right hip, depending on whether you are male [left hip] or female [right hip]. In our style, Hawaiian Kenpo Karate, we wear the belt knot in the front, without differentiating by gender.
5. Try to learn your classmates and Senseis names. Introduce yourself to any new students in class, and learn their names. Be friendly and respectful. Do not mock other styles of Martial Arts - we are all working towards the same goal; that of making ourselves better people.
6. If you are waiting for your class to start, and another class is in session, wait quietly in the observation area. Use the time to stretch or to review your Karate notes. Do not fight the bag, chase others around the room, or talk loudly, as this is a serious obstacle to those students still in class who are trying to hear the Sensei. If a more advanced class is in session, you really should not join in unless specifically given permission to join that particular class by the Sensei who is running that class.
7. Be courteous and respectful to all other class members, guests, visitors, and of course to all Senseis. Remember, when you wear the class uniform, you represent all of us. In class, always address a black belt as "Sensei". [Americanized Korean Karate styles address an instructor as "Sir". Classic Chinese Kung Fu practitioners address their instructor as "Sifu" ("see-foo").]
8. When any Sensei comes into the room for the first time, all students in the Karate room, even if not participating in the class, should **stand and bow** when instructed to do so by higher ranks. During class meditation, students not in that class should stand respectfully until meditation is over. For students in that class, at the beginning and end of meditation, wait for the Sensei to sit or stand first.
9. Always bow to show your respect when entering or leaving the dojo. When bowing, try not to slap your sides, as this is considered disrespectful in our style. (Other styles, such as Hapkido and Tang So Do, may actually incorporate a slap to the thighs as part of their salute.) When bowing to a person, always keep your eyes on them.

10. **Listen carefully** to all instructions. Watch attentively all demonstrations. Don't "horse around" in class.
11. **Never argue with the Sensei.** There are times when you will be sure that you are correct and Sensei is wrong, but debating your point wastes class time and is extremely disrespectful to the instructor. Asking courteous questions in class is fine. If you want to discuss the problem in private with the Sensei, that is acceptable. Just try to remember that there are many variations, both obvious and subtle, in the movements of any style. Differences in emphasis, interpretation, and experience may alter the way particular instructors and students apply these movements. When shown maneuvers at odds with previous teachings, be respectful to the Sensei and allow the variation to enrich your experience of Karate. Think of Kenpo Karate as one of many paths up the side of a great mountain that you are climbing, and remember that "there are many paths to the top of the mountain." If, for some reason, you do not agree with this, then remember "The two main rules of the Dojo":
  - Rule #1: Sensei is always right.
  - Rule #2: In case Sensei is wrong, re-read Rule #1.
12. No gum chewing, eating, drinking, biting nails, or yawning in class. Take your water and bathroom breaks just before class starts, not during class (Unless instructed by the Sensei). Do not eat food anywhere in the Dojo when classes are in session. **Ask Sensei permission** to do any loud or distracting activity not specifically instructed to do. Keep unnecessary conversations with other class members to a minimum, unless an official class break has been declared.
13. Never cross through a class in session. Even when Sensei asks you to come forward during class, do not walk through lines of students, but step back out of line and quickly trot AROUND any lines of students in front of you.
14. Be courteous to your opponents. While "pain builds character", and a small amount of pain may be necessary to fully understand a technique, remember to stop applying pressure in any hold or choke as soon as your victim surrenders by "double tapping" on himself, the floor, or your body. And when sparring without pads on, do not make full-strength contact with your opponent. Remember that "what goes around, comes around." If you feel yourself getting angry with someone, take a break, count to 10, or talk to someone about it, but do not start fighting or raise your voice.
15. Do not enter the mat area with your shoes on. This distributes dirt and sharp objects onto the Karate room floor, and is dangerous to bare-footed karate students.
16. Have a **good attitude**. Be attentive and put as much energy as you can into everything you do - it shows. Help set up before class and clean up after class, including folding up and putting away mats, pads, and equipment. Actively look around you for some way to be helpful.
17. Take notes after class, while the techniques are still fresh in your mind. This will greatly help you review old lessons several months later. You really are expected to keep your own notes.
18. If you make a mistake or break one of the rules, relax - it's okay! Just try to remember to work hard to avoid that mistake in the future. We're all in this together, with the ultimate goal of making ourselves better people.
19. Be positive. Be relaxed. Be loose. **Have fun!** If the above Rules of Conduct are followed, everybody should have a safe, enjoyable, and enriching experience.



Enlighten Your Mind, Respect your Body, Awaken Your Spirit