

THE NATIONAL BLACK BELT KARATE ASSOCIATION,  
FOUNDATION



# TANG SOO DO

## *TRAINING*

Taken from the World Moo Duk Kwan Tang Soo Do Federation Student Manual

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# ***PREFACE***

When making Tang Soo Do a part of your life, whether it large or small, there are several considerations to be made regarding how much of your time and energy to spend on ***Training***.

## **GOALS**

The reasons for studying a martial art, Tang Soo Do or otherwise, differs from person to person. Some train for physical fitness, sports or health reasons, whereas others may study for self-defense. Others may train “***as a way of life***” – a means of finding balance on one’s life. For whatever reasons, personal goals in training should be considered in order to create a direction to take one’s training. Doing this will determine how many hours a day you will practice, how often you will test for promotion, or if tournament competition is for you. However, goals change as one progresses in the martial arts. A proper assessment of personal aims or direction with their training should be re-evaluated from time to time to give proper direction to further progression.

## **INSTRUCTION**

When personal goals have been established, the way one is being instructed must also be taken into consideration. If the goal is to compete in tournaments, an instructor whose focus on tournament-style fighting would be more appropriate. However, if the goal is to attain material prowess, this type of instruction would seem constricting.

This is because certain aspects of training are held in higher value in these two different instruction practices. For instance, a ***traditional martial arts instructor*** whose main goal is to promote martial excellence, ***forms*** are instructed as a means of sharpening focus and concentration along with strengthening technique. For this reason, ***forms*** are the cornerstone to traditional Tang Soo Do as well as other traditional martial arts training. However, a ***tournament-oriented teacher*** may down-play the use of forms in training for sparring competition. Other teaching methods, i.e. speed bags, weight-lifting, etc., are used either in place of or addition to other training techniques.

## ***BASIC TECHNIQUES***

Basic techniques are the main foundation of Tang Soo Do. Through the mastery of ***basics***, any technique or form can be executed with perfection. It is important that basics be practiced repeatedly by the student. Doing this forces the body to adjust to not only to rigorous conditioning, but also to develop proper technique, coordination and balance, even when tired or sore. Repetition of technique is also needed to develop the student’s mental attitude. Only through strenuous, repetitive training does one develop the proper mind-set that a martial artist must have. This mind-set allows the practitioner to overcome mental obstacles or debilitating thoughts that plague students throughout their training – especially towards the beginning.

Execution of each technique also depends on the technique itself. Traditionally, Tang Soo Do emphasizes snapping techniques to insure power and avoid personal injury. However, extending a technique to its full length may also be necessary. For instance, a punch to the face should be snapped to insure a maximum amount of power while, at the same time, avoiding injury to the hand. However, a kick to the back of the knee should be extended to provide the proper submission by your assailant. Uses for snapping or extension of a technique provide them with a better understanding of each technique.

Advantages and disadvantages of techniques should also be shown to beginning students. Each technique has certain advantages and disadvantages in certain situations. For instance, a side kick may not be useful in situations such as close-quarters confrontation or confrontations on slippery surfaces. This could prove dangerous to the practitioner. However, in those situations, more hand techniques could be used for either protection or for attack. Each technique's versatility should also be studied by the student. Each technique (possibly with minor alterations) can be used in different ways. For instance, a knee attack can also double as a block for a lower kick. A knife-hand block can also prove useful as an attack to an opponent's head or neck, each of which demonstrating advantages and disadvantages in various situations.

Finally, basic techniques should be practiced with the utmost seriousness. Basics form the foundation on which the entire art of Tang Soo Do is based. Without a strong foundation, a skilled martial artist cannot develop. For whatever reason one trains in the martial arts, physical fitness or martial training – serious focus on basic techniques must be strictly adhered to in order to insure the best physical, mental and spiritual development.

**In studying any martial art, not only Tang Soo Do, one of the most important considerations a student must make will be to consider what role will be assumed of themselves as a martial artist in light of their new found abilities, and under what circumstances and situations is it right to use their abilities. The principles of Responsibility, Sincerity, and Justice are geared to give a student the best means of resolving problems that may arise without the use of force.**

## ***TEACHING***

Every great martial artist's knowledge and skill can be directly attributed to their instructor's competence. If not for proper instruction, their understanding and prowess in their respective art forms would not be as developed as it was. It is for this reason that every martial arts instructor understands not only their art form, but different aspects towards teaching.

When instructing a Tang Soo Do class or any other martial art, several considerations about teaching should be made. In order to be an effective teacher, one must possess an extensive education, knowledge of their students, and good leadership skills will give an instructor the means to best serve the needs of their students.

## EDUCATION

The best way for an instructor to serve their students is by developing their own wealth of knowledge. Sometimes knowing only their particular art form is not enough. The more an instructor knows about different aspects of martial arts, other art forms, training methods, biology, anatomy, philosophies, history, medicine, biographies, science, nature, religion, and anything else – the more they can take into the classroom. This allows them to bring in many viewpoints of the art to their students, making them a more effective instructor.

### Know Your Students

#### Age Levels

One key to knowing our students is to consider their ages. Teaching small children is much different than teaching teenagers or adults. Children, by nature, are playful and expect to play when they go to Karate class. When teaching children, it is important to keep their interests high. To do this, it is important to give them something new to accomplish every time they come to class. At the same time, order should be maintained in the classroom. Although the class should be made fun to attend, disorder cannot be allowed. Also, rules should be established for the class. If a student misbehaves they should be disciplined to allow for a more orderly class. This will, therefore, improve their behavior in class and allow for a more productive class. When presenting the different aspects to training, it is necessary to keep speech simple to insure understanding. It is also necessary to keep their curriculum simple. Teaching more complex or dangerous techniques to smaller children is not necessary. Instead, their respect for authority, obeying rules, and trying their hardest that will allow them to excel in martial arts as they continue their training.

When teaching teenagers, it is also important to maintain order in the classroom. Teenagers are generally more athletically inclined as well as intense in their training. People of this age group should be taught control in order to insure safety in the classroom as well as technical proficiency with the art. At the same time, teenagers are still developing physically and emotionally. A more physically challenging class will be more engaging for them. Doing this will also develop both the physical and mental abilities of the students. This helps develop the proper mental and physical attributes that are necessary when engaging in a physical confrontation.

When teaching older adults, it is important to understand any physical limitations that they may have. For example, some adults have problems kicking above the waist level. In instances like this, they should be instructed to kick below the waist. In addition to this, an understanding of the anatomy of the leg and its vital points may be necessary. Even though they may not be able to perform a technique to a certain level, they can still be taught to perform the same technique on another level.

## Learning Methods

It is important to realize that different people learn in different methods. As a teacher, it is beneficial to develop different ways to teach a specific technique. For instance, some students can follow sequences better than others, often time making forms easier to learn. These students can sometimes learn forms simple by watching them or by doing them only a few times. Other students learn by doing and must go through a form several times before they catch on. It is important as an instructor to find different ways of presenting a technique, form, or one-step. This will allow all students to follow along in every aspect of training without confusion.

## Expectations

Students study martial arts for different reasons. Some wish to gain physical fitness, some wish to learn to fight, and others wish to compete in tournaments. These goals students have could be considered when deciding on the curriculum of the class. If the emphasis of the class is geared towards tournament fighting, other aspects of training should be emphasized such as sparring or forms. Tournament tactics, combinations, and rules of sparring should be emphasized. If the emphasis of the class is more traditional, all parts of training should be given attention, but in the light of a traditional philosophy, each aspect should be taught with the *intent of personal combat in mind*. Whatever direction the class is taken, the students' expectations should be known in order to make their training most beneficial for each individual student.

## Leadership

In addition to understanding every aspect of the art, building individual credibility is an important part of being an instructor or student. The way that an instructor communicates topics, approaches students and their questions, and maintains the order of the classroom can directly effect how much the students, as well as their spouses, significant others, relations, parents, guardians, mentors, etc., will respond to their teaching. Developing good credibility will reflect on the instructor as a positive role-model and will better develop a student's perception of the instructor as well as the credibility of the art.

## Communication

The cornerstone of being a good instructor is how well communication of information is conveyed. Communication is not necessarily verbal or even direct communication. Lessons can be taught be example, either through demonstrations or applications. Sometimes a technique can best be taught to a student by applying it to them. Other philosophical lessons can be taught through proverbs or stories. Whatever means are used to communicate lessons, the more accurately and somewhat skillfully they taught, the better understanding is experienced by the student.

It is also important to communicate individual ideas clearly and concisely. Small children have limited vocabulary and education. Due to these limitations, the instructor must find ways to communicate concepts in a manner that they will understand.

### Approaching Students

An important part is uplifting students, especially children, is through positive reinforcement. By maintaining an uplifting environment, students do not feel as though they are developing negatively. For example, if a student is performing a technique incorrectly or has a question, it is best to maintain a positive attitude when correcting them. A negative enforcement or scolding attitude may damage their motivation to try their best to improve.

### Classroom Control

Although an instructor should be a positive enforcer for their students does not necessarily mean that an instructor should be soft-willed towards their students. Maintaining order in the classroom is a must when training. Sometimes enforcing rules and prescribing discipline is the best way, but not necessarily the pleasant manner to become a positive role model and a good leader. Being forceful in an individual's method of teaching also fosters the student's view of the art, also showing that it is something not to be taken lightly. Running physically and mentally difficult classes can greatly develop a student's abilities, better serving the student's progression through the art.

It is also important to note what type of student the instructor is dealing with. **Small children, for example, do not react well when yelled at.** Children as well as adults react best on "*how*" something is said rather than "*what*" is said. ***Being forceful, and enforcing rules*** will maintain order in the classroom. Older students do not need to be approached in an overbearing way as may be necessary with children, but expectations should be established for both types of students.

Becoming an instructor is an important duty for all martial artists. However, teaching forces the individual to develop a better understanding for their art form making themselves a better practitioner. Teaching also provides the opportunity to view the learning process first hand and work with people through the process to accomplish their goals. Being a teacher is an important part of training not only for personal development in an art, but for developing relationships with students. This relationship between instructor and student shapes its expansion of the legacy of the art.

## ***PRINCIPLES***

Like all martial arts, Tang Soo Do training is based on certain principles that guide each student through their training. In the Moo Duk Kwan school, there are three principles: ***Responsibility, Sincerity, and Justice.*** These principles are aimed at strengthening the character of every martial artist.

## Responsibility

Along with learning any martial art, there is a *responsibility* every martial artist must assume. Due to the very nature of a martial art (**literally an “Art of War”**), an individual who possesses martial skills must realize the power at his/her disposal. The ability to take another’s personal *safety and defenses* away from them requires a serious commitment on their part. This power is not as random or materialistic as a weapon such as a gun or knife. These things can break or can be taken away. The abilities a skilled martial artist carries *can never be taken away.*

Due to their inner powers, every martial artist must take on the responsibility of protecting those around them. This includes protecting themselves, family, friends, co-workers, etc.. *This responsibility expands to include the neighborhood, state and country.* This responsibility does not necessarily stop with human beings. Responsibility must also be taken on an individual’s actions, whether it may be completing a project at work or a homework assignment at school. A martial artist’s standing in their social environment is part of their obligation to that environment. Individual actions reflect on a person’s character. As a martial artist, it is of the utmost importance to uphold their obligations in order to maintain a proper perspective on their own moral character and to better fulfill their roles as martial artists and responsible citizens of the community.

## Sincerity

*Sincerity* is necessary in order to properly expand personal relationships with others. Sincerity reflects each person’s moral character. Without sincerity, every relationship that a martial artist, or anyone else for that matter, is based off of poor perceptions on each other’s character. This will mar any relationship and will prevent them from growing properly.

It is important for martial artists to be sincere because the foundation of their relationships with those around them are on the utmost importance. It is the responsibility of the martial artists to protect and serve those around them in any capacity possible. However, this obligation to those people will be false unless sincerity is displayed with them at all times. Showing sincerity displays each person’s true moral character and allows for properly developed relationships to be established.

## Justice

The martial artist will be faced with the question on when it is proper or improper to use their abilities. Criteria for these situations will vary and often will occur often *in an instant*, and necessary to protect themselves, family, friends and those around him/her. Ultimately, it is up to the individual to determine if the outcome is *justified* by their actions. The conflict that remains is whether or not these motivations are legitimate.

It has already been indicated previously, it is the responsibility of martial artist to use their skills to protect self and others. However, the question may arise where to protect these individuals may negate physical confrontation. This action will vary upon the skill level of the martial arts practitioner. Someone who may not have advanced skills may need to physically injure someone attempting to hurt them or others because they may not have the ability to prevent it without harm otherwise. However, if a martial artist does have the ability to protect themselves from an attacker without injuring the assailant but chooses to injure them, this action would seemingly be unjustified. The use of force, in this instance was not necessitated by their assailant's attack. Under these circumstances however, there is a definite threat to a person. There is an obvious reason to react physically toward someone who threatens us physically. However, the question of Justice is also raised in cases where there may not be a definite threat. For instance, if a situation arises where someone approaches you in a threatening manner, would it be justified to respond to this person in a violent manner when it may be possible to resolve this issue without violence? It must also be considered whether or not to fight would only cause this person to continue to harass you or if standing up to this person, preferably without physical conflict, would be more beneficial.

The question of Justice for the martial artist is not merely a question of whether or not to fight. It is more of a question of when is it necessary or unnecessary to act or not to act in a given circumstance. The question of whether an action or inaction is just or not is closely tied to how a martial artist, in light of their special abilities, will resolve their problems. This question may differ from person to person and situation to situation, but must be addressed by the student of the martial arts.



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