
A Gentle Introduction to the

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- What are Martial Arts?

Martial Arts are the study of efficient fighting techniques. It is this efficiency which can allow a smaller person to defeat a larger person. The study of martial arts is done for a variety of reasons. Typically, people start martial arts in order to learn how to defend themselves. As they progress, often the motivation becomes one of self improvement and even spiritual health. There are all sorts of martial arts: soft styles, hard styles, self-defense oriented styles, sport styles, physical styles, spiritual styles, internal styles, external styles. Most systems encompass more than one of these categories.

- What is Self Defense?

Self defense is the study of efficient fighting techniques for the sole purpose of defending oneself against aggression. Because of this, the techniques tend to be fairly dirty, nasty things, which can rapidly injure and therefore disable the attacker without relying on a tremendous amount of physical strength and dexterity. Martial arts and self defense are related but they are not the same thing. Martial arts techniques can be extremely useful in self defense situations, however the defender must understand the difference between practice in a dojo and combat in the streets. For instance, to win in martial arts competition, you have to defeat your opponent. You have to execute techniques better than they do. In self defense, all you have to do is make them stop their attack. This does not require you to win. This only requires you to make it difficult enough for them to consider it not worth while. A saying from the oldest book on strategy says that, "To subdue your opponent without fighting is the ultimate martial art." On the other hand, martial arts are often done under certain rules so that the participants can practice while minimizing the chance of injury. The only rule

for defending oneself on the street is that there are no rules. Fight only to defend yourself, but do what is necessary to survive. The study of martial arts can give you a better chance at doing this.

- What is a dojo?

Dojo is essentially a school. Do means way, jo means learn, so dojo means the place where we go to learn the way. This is a Japanese word. The Korean word is Dojang.

- What are hard techniques?

Hard techniques are techniques that tend to meet force with stronger, more efficient force. Such techniques include blocks and strikes (e.g. punches and kicks). Hard techniques tend to be more linear. Small martial artists can produce more force than the typical untrained large person because their techniques are much more efficient.

- What are soft techniques?

Soft techniques are techniques that tend to sidestep or redirect force. Such techniques include parries, grappling techniques, joint locks, and throws. These techniques tend to be more circular as they are taking the force that comes towards the defender and redirecting it. Throws are considered soft techniques because the defender does not actually strike the attacker – the ground does. However, it is often true that the ground can hit you much harder than most people. An old saying goes, “It’s not the fall that kills you; it’s the sudden stop at the end.”

- What is a hard style and is a soft style? How are they different?

Hard styles are those collections of martial arts techniques which tend to concentrate on the hard techniques. Examples of this are Karate, Tae Kwon Do, Thai Kickboxing (Muay Thai), and Boxing. Soft styles are those collections of martial arts techniques which tend to concentrate on the soft techniques. Examples of this are Kung Fu, Tai Chi, Aiki Jujitsu, and its derivatives (Judo, Jujitsu, Aikido, Hapkido). Of course, these definitions are general. In fact, there is no martial art which is purely comprised of only hard techniques or only soft techniques. Quite often as the student progresses in a hard style, they will learn more soft techniques. Likewise, as the student progresses in a soft style, they will learn more hard techniques. (This is the general theory. In modern times, as most of us need day jobs, martial artists often don’t get to the fusion of hard and soft techniques.)

- What is Karate?

Karate is a hard style that was distilled in Okinawa from Chinese fighting styles. Originally called “te”, for hand, it was later called kara-te for “Chinese hand”. In later years, the Japanese modified this definition to mean “Empty hand”. As Okinawa was occupied by the Japanese at the time of Karate’s introduction to Okinawa, it was a primary self defense style for the unarmed population. The Japanese in general sneered at the art, preferring Judo. A challenge match between a young Japanese police officer and Judo practitioner against the leading Okinawan Karate teacher of the day, Chojun Miyagi (No – not the guy from “Karate Kid!”) lead to the Japanese accepting Karate. The 75 year old Miyagi dropped his youthful opponent with one punch to the solar plexus. The man who brought Karate to the Japanese mainland was Gichin Funakoshi. He founded a version called Shotokan which is widely practiced today.

- What is Aiki Jujitsu?

Jujitsu (literally “the gentle fighting art”) is an empty handed extension of the sword fighting art of the Japanese Samuarai. The actual ancient art is called Aiki Jujitsu. This involves joint locks, throws, strikes, blocks, and chokes. Aiki Jujitsu went through some changes in the late 1800s and early 1900s. Jigoro Kano removed many of the dangerous techniques to create Judo (“the gentle way”). This allowed students to practice full speed against resisting opponents, but with far fewer injuries that happened when Jujitsu was practiced at full speed. About the same time, Morehei Uyeshiba took a different set of techniques out to create Aikido. (A jitsu is a fighting style. A do is a way.) About the same time, a Korean named Yong Suhl Choi combined Jujitsu techniques with the kicks and punches so prevalent in Korean martial arts to create Hapkido. (Hapkido is the Korean pronunciation of the Kanji that in Japanese is pronounced Aikido.)

- What is Zen Budokai?

Zen Budokai is an integrated, multidisciplinary martial arts system created by Duke Moore that integrates techniques from Judo, Aiki JuJitsu, several systems of Karate (Shorin-ji, Shotokan, and Kyokushin primarily) and Aikido with techniques from boxing and wrestling. Throwing, restraint, blocking, and counter-striking methods are borrowed from each of these styles and are integrated in the Zen Budokai system. The names are all over the map – many of them being in Japanese and many in English. Zen Budokai is the self defense system that we learn in our dojo. The system name is symbolic of things that Duke Moore considers important. Budokai is literally “martial way society”.

- What is Zen?

This is a tough question because if you ask it to 100 people who practice Zen, you will probably get 100 different answers. Even asking the same person twice will

probably yield different answers. Roughly put, Zen can be defined as the mental discipline that allows you to act freely when you have to. Originally part of the Eastern philosophy this has been popularized by martial artists and athletes in the Western world. The phrase, “Just do it,” was not created by some advertising agency – it was lifted from a book on Zen. The study of martial arts is often associated with Zen because the martial arts give you the mental discipline to act freely when you have to in a self defense situation. It is the constant practice that can make a martial artist’s reactions to danger almost automatic. This ability to act, without wasting time on a conscious thought process, is the essence of Zen and what it is like to “Just do it.”

- Who is Duke Moore and how is he related to our current instructors?

Duke Moore (10th Dan Aiki Jujitsu) is a highly regarded martial artist who learned from many oriental masters in California and New York in the 1940s and 1950s. He has had a variety of careers including amateur boxer and prison guard at San Quentin. He ran a martial arts studio in San Francisco for over 30 years where quite a few well known martial arts instructors taught and were taught. He has a view that there should be no boundaries and divisions between the various martial arts styles. It is this belief that lead him to found ATAMA, a martial arts instructor’s teaching organization. Our highest ranking instructors in the Stanford Jujitsu Club, Jim Moses (8th Dan Aiki Jujitsu), Dave Wolfe (6th Dan Aiki Jujitsu), and Harry Sherman (7th Dan Aiki Jujitsu), all trained directly under Duke. (Incidentally, a Dan ranking is the rank of Black Belt. Thus, a 10th Dan is a 10th Degree Black Belt, a 7th Dan is a 7th Degree Black Belt, etc.)

- Why do we practice falling so much?

We practice falling because in our workouts people hit the ground a lot. One of the key features of Aiki Jujitsu and its derivative styles is the throwing. When you throw an opponent, they are not usually hurt by the throw, but by hitting the ground. However, there are ways of falling so that the you will not be injured by hitting the ground. Thus, we can practice some pretty hard throws without injuring each other. Furthermore, if you get thrown to the ground in an actual street fight situation, knowing how to fall properly can save you from serious injury and allow you to keep defending yourself. A person who does not know how to fall properly has a very good chance of not getting up unassisted from some of the throws we do. The falling practice starts on the first night that you come to the club and continues on forever. As you progress, not only do you learn how to do more devastating throws, but you also learn how to survive them.

- Okay, but I’m a 100 pound weakling. How am I supposed to stop a 200 pound person who is much stronger than me?

One of the central principles of martial arts (and one of the key reasons why they are useful for self defense) is that they are not based on size and strength. In particular, hard style techniques are based on mechanical efficiency. While an untrained fighter might swing at you using only their arm strength, a person trained in Karate will use their arm, shoulders, hips and legs to generate power. The fact that their entire body is acting together allows them to hit harder than their inefficient larger opponent. Likewise, Jujitsu is based not on strength, but on breaking the opponent's balance. Once the opponent's balance is broken, it becomes much easier to throw them since the Earth's gravity is assisting you. Furthermore, very few people know how to mount a counter attack once their balance is broken. Every throw starts with a balance break. To paraphrase the Ferengi, "The first rule of (balance) acquisition is, 'Once you have their balance never give it back!' " All this being said, it never hurts you to be stronger, faster, and more flexible than your opponent.

- What does Kempo mean?

Kempo literally means "fist way". Quite a few martial arts are called Kempo, some Chinese based, some are Japanese based. The Kempo we do in the club is closer to the Japanese or Okinawan Karate than, say Ed Parker's American Kempo.

- What is the difference between how a black belt and a white belt does a technique?

There is no instantaneous transformation from white belt to black belt. Many of the techniques used at black belt levels are simply combinations of techniques learned at white belt level. The differences are in how well the technique is executed and in what combinations they are performed. As you rise through the ranks you tend to get more efficient in your techniques. The hips, legs, arms and torso all move much more in synchrony when executing techniques. So the same techniques that might have a 70% chance of defeating an attacker when executed by a Yellow Belt may have a 95% chance of success for a Black Belt. Plus, the higher you go the more options you have for responding to a given attack. Many of the throws at a new level are extensions of throws at previous levels. At each new level (through second degree black belt), new techniques are added at each level as well as new combinations of old techniques.

- What about all that fancy stuff that I see the upper belts doing? Is any of that stuff useful? How am I supposed to do that?

Many of the upper belt techniques will look like they are impossible to learn and dangerous to both the person on the giving end and on the receiving end. Some of them seem very practical, some seem impractical. There are several reasons

why we learn such techniques over time. First of all, techniques which do not seem practical at first can become very effective with enough practice. Secondly, learning such a technique and overcoming the difficulty extends the student. By learning something difficult, the student learns that they can overcome yet another challenge. Furthermore, there are techniques which do not seem practical at first, but are building blocks for future techniques. There is an old saying that goes, “Any sufficiently advanced technology is indistinguishable from magic.” As you stick with martial arts study, more of the techniques will make sense. Unless you are just incredibly gifted, this understanding will only take place over months or years. However, each of these understandings can be a small revelation. That is what keeps many of us practicing martial arts – not just self defense – over the years. You are not supposed to do that fancy stuff right away. However, there is no reason why almost anyone cannot learn to do it over time. Most of the upper belts you see now were in your position just a couple of years ago.

- There are lots of martial arts styles. There are lots of martial arts clubs on campus. How do I know which one is right for me?

There is no perfect style. Every major style involves certain principles that have allowed the various practitioners to escape from conflict. Every style makes certain assumptions about what set of techniques will be used to defend against a given set of attacks. Without these assumptions, very few of us would know where to start. However, it is also true that each of us is different in size, strength, and temperament. Things that make a lot of sense for one individual may not make as much sense for a different person with a different body type. A fairly famous martial arts instructor once said, “The truth will be different for each person. Research your own truth. Absorb what is useful. Discard what is useless.” That being said there is a fairly strong consensus among many students and instructors that I have spoken with that one should pursue a given style until at least black belt before one is mature enough in martial arts to blend in another style. Having a Yellow Belt in 6 different styles will not increase your understanding of the martial arts. More important than a given style is how a given instructor teaches it. Go to the demonstrations. See what they teach. See if you think you can learn from the instructors and upper belt students. If that is the case, you will probably get a lot out of the club. However, like regular classes, what you get out of it is roughly proportional to what you put in it.

- So do people learn self defense or martial arts here?

No, we teach a self defense class, but it is taught in the context of a martial arts system. Thus, people get belts in Aiki Jujitsu (which we commonly abbreviate to Jujitsu). Learning self defense in the context of a martial art gives the system more organization than it would otherwise have and gives the student a better

gauge on their progress.

- Aren't there self defense classes that only take a few weeks to learn?

Yes. However, the difference between learning self defense that way and learning it through martial arts is pretty analogous to trying to lose weight through a crash diet versus a long term change in eating and exercise habits. It is possible to get some useful information from a quickie self defense class. However, without the practice and discipline that the student picks up through training in martial arts, the student's reflexes and coordination do not improve. Thus, the chances of being able to use it 5 years down the line are considerably slimmer.

- How are the workouts organized?

The material is organized as sets of defenses against different sets of attacks. These sets are written up on large poster sized charts that are placed around the room. On a given chart there will be some grouping of techniques. Some examples of the types of charts are:

Aiki Jujitsu Charts (4 Charts): Defenses that rely primarily on grappling techniques and throws.

Kempo Charts (6 Charts): Defenses that rely more on hard striking techniques which may be followed by throws.

Nage (throws): Defenses based on Judo style throws.

Osoto Gari Defenses: Defenses based on one particular throw: Osoto Gari. This throw can be learned at a white belt level and thus is used to teach the basics of throwing and falling to the beginner.

Each belt level has certain requirements that include being able to do techniques off of certain charts. At each new belt level, the student is given a handout that contains the sections of charts for that level. Thus, as the student progresses they are able to execute a higher and higher percentage of the techniques on the charts. This continues until the student has reached 2nd Dan (2nd Degree Black Belt).

- What do we learn and when?

The following outline is how I interpret what the various charts are trying to teach at a particular level.

White Belt \Rightarrow Yellow Charts: Aiki 1, Basic Falling, Osoto Gari Defenses
– A basic set of techniques to get you started.

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- Basic Falling is about how to get thrown to the ground without getting hurt. As stated earlier, this is fundamental both for street defense and for progressing in the club.
 - The Osoto Gari Defenses teach you the basics of throwing on a throw that is fairly easy to do and fairly easy to take.
 - The Aiki 1 chart gives you a wide sampling of basic defenses. Many of the more advanced charts have techniques that build upon this. Aiki 1 includes some ground defenses which are very useful for assault situations.

Yellow Belt \Rightarrow Green Charts: Aiki 2, Kempo 1, Mat Techniques, Escape Nage

- If you stay until this level, you will learn a wide variety of techniques.
- Escape Nages build upon the throwing experience of Osoto Gari and start working on some more complicated throws. Chief among these are the hip throws (Ogoshi and its variations) and the body slams. Not only are these throws more difficult, but they are also much harder to take. Thus, there is a new emphasis on falling techniques, i.e. how to survive a hard throw.
- Kempo 1 teaches the basic stances, strikes and blocks used in Karate.
- Mat Work teaches you more ways of struggling with an opponent on the ground.
- Aiki 2 gives more defense combinations, including the first experience with choking an opponent.

Green Belt \Rightarrow Brown 3 Charts: Kempo 2, Police Comealongs, Gyaku

- Kempo 2 teaches you some hard style defenses to certain attacks making use of the Kempo 1 you learned previously.
- The Police Comealongs are control methods for controlling and moving an opponent once you have subdued them.
- Gyaku are follow up techniques to throws. Here you throw the opponent on the ground and then put some nasty hold on them. The throws are mostly ones that you have learned in previous levels.

Brown 3 \Rightarrow Brown 2 Charts: Aiki 3 (1-20), Kempo 3 (1-15), Nage

- Aiki 3 continues the Aiki chart tradition of self defense combinations which involve relatively few strikes. Many techniques are finished off with one of the Police Comealongs learned earlier. Also, there is a set of defenses against knife attacks.
- Kempo 3 starts to combine the hard style stuff with throws. Thus, in response to an attack, you hit the opponent 3 or 4 times and finish

them off with a throw. This allows you to sap the strength of a larger opponent so that your throw requires less effort.

- This part of the Nage chart includes throws that are harder and can be risky to both you and your opponent if not done properly. Not only will the throws be more dependent upon the thrower having good technique, but the throwee must often launch themselves into the throw to avoid injury. Another set of throws modifies the hip throws so that one of your legs can be used to cut the opponents legs out from under them. This requires being very comfortable with hip throws. This is why these are left until brown belt.

Brown 2 \Rightarrow Brown 1 Charts: Chokes & Strangles, Kempo 3 (16-25), Gyaku (10-25), Nage

- Kempo 3 includes more hard style techniques used for setting up throws, but now these throws are some of the more adventurous ones learned at the previous level.
- Gyaku also includes some of the more adventurous throws from the previous level along with some fairly neat finishing moves on the end.
- The Nage finishes out the adventurous throw series, however by this time these throws are fairly easy to do and take.
- Chokes & Strangles does a fairly large sets of chokes (air constriction) and strangles (blood constrictions) that allow you to incapacitate an opponent without much long term damage to them.

Brown 1 \Rightarrow Black Charts: Aiki 3 (21-30), Nage No Kata, Tensho Aiki, Falling, Six Months Teaching

- Aiki 3 rounds out with weapons defenses (clubs and knives).
- Nage No Kata as done in our club is a 3 step way of doing throws so that the instructors can verify that you can execute the throws without using momentum. It is slow and precise.
- Tensho Aiki is the exact opposite. It is very dynamic. Much like Aikido, these throws are variations on familiar throws, but use the opponent's momentum more than anything else to execute the throw. Falling techniques are checked here to make sure you can handle a wide variety.
- Six months of supervised teaching means that you will be judged largely on how well you teach other students at this level. To be a black belt involves more than just being able to do the techniques – it involves having the patience to teach them to beginners and experienced students alike.

- Where can I find more information on this material?

There is quite a bit of information on line. The world wide web page for the club is at the location <http://jujitsu.stanford.edu/>. This document itself is at the location http://www.hpl.hp.com/personal/Danny_Abramovitch/zb_intro.html for HTML or at the location

http://www.hpl.hp.com/personal/Danny_Abramovitch/zb_intro.ps for Postscript or at http://www.hpl.hp.com/personal/Danny_Abramovitch/zb_intro.pdf for Adobe Acrobat.

There is an e-mail list which is described in Don Geddis' Aiki Jujitsu: Online Page

(<http://jujitsu.stanford.edu/online.html>).

There are also individual pages by various club instructors on the web with some martial arts information. Don Geddis' page is at location <http://geddis.org/>. Roger Avedon's is at location <http://www.slip.net/debk/roger/>. Danny Abramovitch (me) has a page at location http://www.hpl.hp.com/personal/Danny_Abramovitch/martial_su.html.

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